



*Reach Higher,* **AMERICA**  
OVERCOMING CRISIS IN THE U.S. WORKFORCE

Report of the  
National Commission  
on Adult Literacy

June 2008

NATIONAL  
COMMISSION   
on ADULT LITERACY

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## FOREWORD

Lee Kwan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore and architect of its economic miracle over the past half century, once reasoned that a healthy economy depended on four fundamental requirements: dependable electrical power, clean potable water, world-class transportation, and an educated and trained workforce. In our current global economy, we can no longer take these precepts for granted.

The harsh fact is that we have a crisis today in America. At a time when one out of three of our children is not graduating from high school, the competitiveness of our workforce at all levels has significantly declined, threatening our standard of living and way of life. It is time to act. It is widely known that a vast number of adults need educational services to be ready for the college and the job training that our global economy requires. But our adult education and workforce skills development programs, designed for a different reality, are not meeting the needs of America's citizens or its workers.

The National Commission on Adult Literacy (July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2008) concludes that while the nation's situation is one of grave urgency, we have the power to reverse it. In *Reach Higher, America*, the Commission offers analysis and recommendations to do just that. While we rely on government to educate the population, other groups must get involved to regain our global leadership and retain our standard of living. Having spent my career in business, I cannot emphasize enough the important role of business leadership as part of the solution.

Over the past 30 years, many studies have forecast the dire situation that has now materialized. *Reach Higher, America* builds on this body of work. Some of the most widely distributed studies are cited in Appendix 3. We appreciate the dedication and energy of the people responsible for them. Their warnings have been consistent across the years, yet the problem has continued to grow into the crisis we have today.

The Commission hopes that *Reach Higher, America*, added to the weight of their accumulated evidence, will motivate us all to finally confront our adult education problems and gear up to solve them. The statistics presented in this report aren't just numbers, they represent real people who need education and training in order to secure decent paying jobs in this global economy. The people who would benefit from programs make up half of the adult population in America. Our nation cannot succeed economically without them.

On behalf of the entire Commission, I'm pleased to acknowledge the dozens of organizations and individuals that have given time, advice, and analysis to our work over the past two years. They are recognized in the Appendices. This study could not have been done without them. Special thanks also are due to our contributors: Dollar General Corporation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the McGraw-Hill Companies, Harold W. McGraw, Jr., the Ford Foundation, and The Joyce Foundation. *Reach Higher, America* does not necessarily reflect the views of these sponsors, but our work and our challenge to America would not have been possible without their vision and generosity.

Finally, I must thank my fellow commissioners and our study director. They've brought wisdom, enthusiasm, and commitment to our endeavor. It has been gratifying for us all, even though very sobering at times. Our report is not the final word; indeed, we differ among ourselves about some aspects of it. But we are eager for the debate to begin and intend to stay actively involved.

David A. Perdue

Chairman





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education drives the economy. Almost a decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, America faces a choice: We can invest in the basic education and skills of our workforce and remain competitive in today's global economy, or we can continue to overlook glaring evidence of a national crisis and move further down the path to decline. In *Reach Higher, America*, the National Commission on Adult Literacy presents powerful evidence that our failure to address America's adult education and workforce skills needs is putting our country in great jeopardy and threatening our nation's standard of living and economic viability. The Commission recommends immediate action to reverse the course we are on. It calls for strong, bold leadership from federal and state government, and it challenges business leaders, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector to become part of the solution.

### A. FACING THE PRESENT

America is losing its place as a world leader in education, and in fact is becoming less educated. Among the 30 OECD free-market countries, the U.S. is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation. And we are losing ground to other countries in educational attainment.

More and more, the American economy requires that most workers have at least some postsecondary education or occupational training to be ready for current and future jobs in the global marketplace, yet we are moving further from that goal. By one set of measures, more than 88 million adults have at least one major educational barrier—no high school diploma, no college, or ESL language needs. With a current U.S. labor force of about 150 million (16 and older), a troubling number of prime working age adults likely will fall behind in their struggle to get higher wage jobs, or to qualify for the college courses or job training that will help them join or advance in jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage.

More than two-thirds of the workforce is beyond the reach of the schools. Yet our current adult education system—designed for a different time and different challenges—is not equipped to address this urgent national need. Federal adult education, training, and English language programs reach only about 3 million adults a year.

~ ***U.S. Scores Poorly Internationally.*** The U.S. is the only country among 30 OECD free-market countries where the current generation is less well educated than the previous one. The U.S. is also losing ground in international comparisons in terms of high school diplomas and college degrees awarded. Further, while we score as one of the highest countries in numbers of well educated people we also score near the top in the largest number of people at the lowest education levels—a form of inequality that affects all Americans. Minority groups—whose numbers, in some cases, are increasing as a percentage of overall population growth—are disproportionately at the low end of educational attainment, especially Hispanics, blacks, and American Indians/Alaska Natives. About 55 percent of adults at the lowest literacy levels did not graduate from high school and have no GED or high school equivalency diploma.

~ ***High School Dropout Rates Are Staggering.*** Every year, one in three young adults—more than 1.2 million people—drop out of high school. Even more alarming, many high school graduates who do complete high school lack basic skills and readiness for job training and college.

~ ***Low Parent Learning Affects Children.*** One in four U.S. working families is low-income, and one in five children lives in poverty. Parents and caregivers in many of these households lack the education and skills to earn a family-sustaining wage.

~ ***Low Literacy in Burgeoning Prison Population.*** One in every 100 U.S. adults 16 and older is in prison or jail in America (about 2.3 million in 2006). About 43 percent do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, and 56 percent have very low literacy skills. Ninety-five percent of incarcerated people return to our communities. It is hard enough for them to find jobs burdened with a prison record, but it is nearly impossible without the necessary education and basic skills.

~ ***Large and Growing English Language and Literacy Need.*** About 2 million immigrants come to the U.S. each year seeking jobs and better lives—the promise of America. About 50 percent of them have low literacy levels and lack high school education and English language skills, severely limiting their access to jobs and job training, college, and citizenship.



~ ***Aging of the Baby Boomers.*** About 8,000 people turn 60 every day. As these “baby boomers” leave the workforce, their places are being taken by the smaller cohort of workers born in the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, the U.S. workforce is increasing more slowly and, without intervention, is likely to become less educated on average.

The Commission finds that current solutions fall short in crucial ways. It discusses these in depth—including failures in the Workforce Investment Act, declining enrollments in current programs, inadequate ESL training, lack of data at both the federal and state levels, and problems of fragmented and insufficient funding. It also addresses underuse of the GED; lack of alignment among curricula, assessment instruments, and systems; and lack of adult education teacher training and credentials.

The Commission concludes that the present situation threatens not only America’s ability to compete in the world economy, but its civic preparedness, its national security, and its very democratic core. It offers an action program to overcome crisis and throws down the gauntlet: the time to act is now!

## **B. GOING TO SCALE: 20 Million by 2020**

**RECOMMENDATION:** *The National Commission on Adult Literacy calls on Congress to transform the adult education and literacy system into an adult education and workforce skills system with the capacity to effectively serve 20 million adults annually by the year 2020.*

**RECOMMENDATION:** *The Commission calls on Congress and state governments to make postsecondary and workforce readiness the new mission of the adult education and workforce skills system.*

A service level of 20 million by 2020 will produce a cumulative enrollment increase 3.5 times greater than we have now, and system capacity will increase seven times. But simply bringing large numbers of adults back into the system is not enough. That new system—which must be adequately funded—must produce results. The hallmark of the new system will be its ability to measure the number of adults who achieve GEDs or equivalents, English language proficiency, credentials and workforce certificates, adults enrolled in postsecondary education and job training, and incumbent workers enrolled in basic skills programs. The Commission proposes goals for 2020 in each of these areas.

To achieve the transformation needed to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century goals in America, the Commission calls for nine broad actions, and it also offers a variety of specific recommendations in each of those areas. The broad action recommendations are:

**ACTION 1:** *Congress should pass and the President should sign a comprehensive new Adult Education and Economic Growth Act to overhaul and expand adult education and workforce skills training.*

This new Act should be bold in scale and crafted to excite the public imagination—similar to such great historical achievements as the original GI Bill and the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. The Commission calls for public funding of the new Adult Education and Workforce Skills System of \$20 billion a year by 2020, about five times the current expenditure for related programs under Titles I and II of the current Workforce Investment Act. Additional funding must come from corporate and private philanthropy. The Commission also recommends that Congress establish a National Trust or National Training Fund.

The new Adult Education and Workforce Skills System should also connect and coordinate essential elements of Titles I and II of the Workforce Investment Act of the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and the adult education and basic workforce preparation components of programs in other federal departments. These programs should be aligned with postsecondary education entrance requirements—especially at community colleges.



**ACTION 2:** *The new Act should focus service on the needs of the unemployed; low-skilled incumbent workers; immigrants with limited or no English; parents or caregivers with low basic skills; incarcerated adults; high school dropouts; and high school graduates not ready for college.*

The report offers specific recommendations for each of these groups. At their core is one overarching recommendation: that each group, including incumbent workers, must be explicitly written into law and adequately provided for.

**ACTION 3:** *The new Act should redefine the fundamentals of adult education, set program goals, and offer incentives and strategies to increase learner access.*

The expanded and reformed System should continue to provide basic reading, writing, math, and English language services. But it should also teach adults how to communicate, acquire information, think critically, solve problems, use technology, and work in teams. And greater emphasis should be placed on career exploration, counseling services, and instruction that is customized to the context in which it will be used.

Other actions call for states to set enrollment goals for all programs in the System; for Pell grants and financial aid programs to become more responsive to current adult needs and circumstances; for activities that increase student access to and success in programs; and for strong collaboration between federal and state government in ways that benefit the entire country.

**ACTION 4:** *Strong national leadership must be provided to develop and deploy technology-assisted learning, including the creation of a national Web portal for adult learners.*

The Commission believes that both public and private funding is essential to flesh out and put into use technology in all its forms—and it emphasizes that we cannot reach the recommended 20 million goal by 2020 without providing access beyond classroom walls. Properly deployed, technology has the power to provide unprecedented access to adult learners—at times, in places, and at a pace convenient to their life and job circumstances. It is an absolutely vital ingredient.

**ACTION 5:** *For the new Act to be successful, Congress must provide significant support for a national, independent research and development program.*

The research should focus on best practices and approaches that work, and emphasize critical areas of need. The National Institute for Literacy, a unique, quasi-independent resource, should be strengthened to lead the federal research and development role, and it should be fully restored to its originally mandated adult focus.

**ACTION 6:** *States should engage in comprehensive planning and establish goals to improve educational attainment and workforce skills of their adults in light of their economic development goals.*

**ACTION 7:** *The states should legislate authority for coordination and alignment of systems consistent with their postsecondary education, workforce, and economic development goals. In some cases, a cross-agency planning body already exists; in others it may need to be created. In some states, a cabinet level position might be either established or strengthened. Whatever the approach, the involvement of the governor's office is essential.*

**ACTION 8:** *Under the Act, new federal funds should be awarded to states following federal approval of a comprehensive adult education plan that each state develops and updates periodically for federal review. These funds should be available for awards within the first year of passage of the new Act. States should be "held harmless" at current federal adult education grant levels.*

The states must take a central leadership role, while coordinating their activities with new federal Act goals. Like federal government, most states have not developed effective links across agencies and programs that provide services, or steps to connect their adult education and workforce skills training services to economic development policies and plans.



**ACTION 9:** *States must invest in the skills of their workers so that increased productivity helps offset the effect of low-cost labor furnished by developing countries. Business must be an active partner in this effort.*

States and businesses should co-invest in the skills of the states' workforce to be sure that workers can adapt continuously to evolving labor market needs. Only 3 to 4 percent of workers with the most limited literacy proficiencies receive basic skills training from their employers. Low-skilled incumbent workers should be given top priority and incentives to spur their participation. The Commission suggests various steps that states and employers might take to accomplish these goals.

Business and labor groups must be more active advocates at national, state, and local levels. They should work more with state legislatures, and call for leadership by chambers of commerce, workforce investment boards, trade associations, and other groups.

**Philanthropic and Nonprofit Involvement.** The fundamental reform called for by the Commission also requires philanthropic organizations—both corporate and private foundations—to play an active role. Nonprofit groups of all kinds also have a key role—ranging across groups with responsibility for research, instructional service, and policy development in adult education and workforce skills. To boost the effectiveness of these disparate nonprofit entities, the Commission recommends establishing a national “superagency” membership organization to provide an effective leadership voice.

**Building Public Awareness.** As we build infrastructure for a new expanded system, we also must launch well-funded public campaigns, on an appropriate schedule and scale, to motivate adult learners to enroll in programs and to build public understanding of the value of the adult education enterprise in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.

## C. WE ALL BENEFIT

Better educated and more literate adults fare better in every way: higher rates of employment and better jobs, substantial increases in personal income and individual economic well being, dramatically increased fiscal contributions to government at all levels, greater success for their children as the educational levels of parents and caregivers rise, significantly increased voter participation, higher rates of citizenship for foreign-born immigrants, enhanced volunteerism and civic engagement, and better health and more effective healthcare. The last section of *Reach Higher, America* provides compelling data about each of these benefit areas.

If the nation reaches the Commission's projected goals, our adult learners' fiscal contributions to national, state, and local government will more than offset the cost of paying for the build up of America's new Adult Education and Workforce Skills System. To illustrate with just one measure, the net fiscal impact for federal, state, and local governments from getting 400,000 adults to earn a high school diploma is estimated to be \$2.5 billion a year. If, by 2020, 4 million dropouts earn a high school diploma, the net fiscal contributions would exceed \$25 billion annually.

## FINAL NOTE

The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act is at the very heart of the Commission's action plan. The proposed legislation will strengthen and align the nation's existing adult basic education and workforce skills systems to address the priority education needs of American adults, who in staggering numbers lack skills needed for college and jobs. Adults who enroll in this new adult basic education system will be better prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and job training and will move more seamlessly into well-paying jobs of the future.



# REACH HIGHER, AMERICA

## OVERCOMING CRISIS IN THE U.S. WORKFORCE

### Section A. FACING THE PRESENT

#### 1. Call to Action

The world economy has undergone a fundamental transformation. Shocking demographic evidence indicates that unless America invests in its greatest asset—the knowledge and skills of its people—we will not compete successfully in this new global environment.

After two years of examining the nation's adult education needs, the National Commission on Adult Literacy, listed in Appendix 2, concludes that basic education deficiencies among 80 to 90 million adults pose a danger to our country. We face an adult education crisis that permeates every dimension of American life. It saps the energy and capability of our people, our economy, and our institutions. It feeds our national unemployment, the welfare rolls, and our correctional institutions. It literally robs America of its future.

If we fail to act, not only will we lose our ability to compete in the world marketplace, we will be unable to maintain our standard of living, preserve our democratic principles, or protect national security. America has always responded with determination and courage when confronted with danger. We need to rise to the challenge now.

At a time when the demand for workforce skills is higher than ever, the nation's education and skills levels are declining. To find and hold jobs that will pay a family-sustaining wage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, adults must have at least some postsecondary education or occupational training, but we are moving farther from that goal. Already unable to meet the nation's needs, America's workforce is further compromised by a lagging K–12 educational system, a significant increase in immigration from non-English speaking countries, and an adult education system that is now obsolete and ill-equipped to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs.

This report is a call to action. The future of our country rests on whether we will squarely face the facts presented and engage our institutions and our people in a comprehensive nonpartisan effort to meet that future.

*Workers who were skilled with their hands and could reliably work in repetitive and sometimes physically demanding jobs were the engine of the old economy. In today's New Economy, knowledge-based jobs are driving prosperity...jobs held by individuals with at least two years of college.*

— 2007 State New Economy Index



Elementary and secondary schools and postsecondary education cannot meet the challenge alone. The undereducated adults of our concern are largely beyond their reach. It will take a monumental effort on the part of the adult education system to turn the tide.

Members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy are unanimous in calling for a fundamental transformation of the adult education enterprise in America. Federal and state government must provide the leadership, but business, philanthropy, nonprofit groups, and the general public must also do their part. We will all sink or rise together.

## 2. Our Treacherous Path

In assessment after assessment, America fares poorly in international education and skill comparisons. In fact, the head of one hostile nation has spotlighted the economic and potential security weaknesses that result from this situation. In an interview broadcast on *60 Minutes* in June 2007, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pointed to America's "20 percent illiteracy rate" to illustrate our vulnerability.

Although he neglected to recognize his own country's literacy problems and understated the magnitude of ours, his connection of America's "illiteracy" to its national security should have jolted our own leaders. But at every level of American society, we continue to ignore the abundant evidence before our eyes.

Americans should have been stunned when the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), released in 2005, revealed that a staggering 30 million American adults scored at "below basic"—meaning they could perform no more than the most rudimentary literacy tasks. Another 63 million adults could perform only simple, basic everyday literacy activities.<sup>1</sup>

The NAAL findings are ominous because most good jobs require at least some education beyond high school. The NAAL found that of the approximately 222 million adults aged 16 or older living in households or prisons in the United States, some 93 million lack literacy at a level needed to enroll in the postsecondary education or job training that current and future jobs require.

This alarming number should have produced a national outcry. But—at a time when our economy and welfare are more dependent on knowledge and skills than ever before—there was barely a whisper.

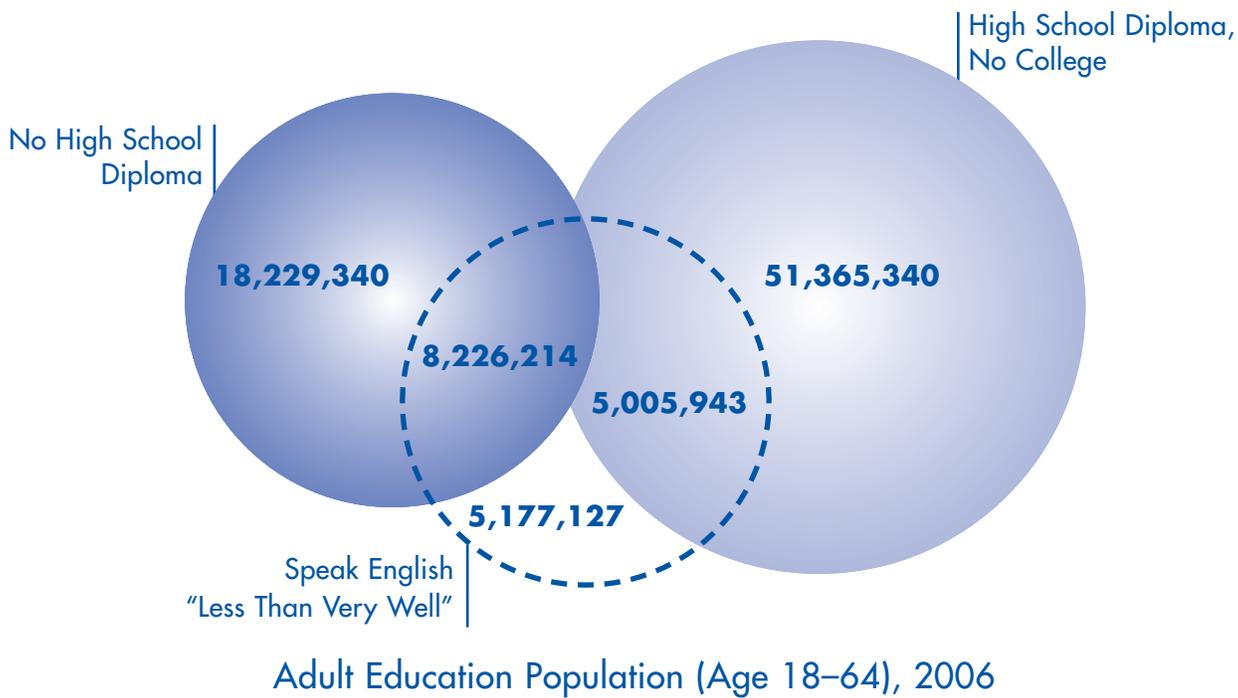
Another study of education levels has produced similar results. Analysis by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) reveals that 18.2 million English-speaking adults lack a high school diploma, more than 51.3 million English-speaking adults hold a high



school diploma but have not been to college, and 18.4 million have limited English skills. Of the limited English speakers, 8.2 million have not completed high school, and 5 million completed high school but do not hold college credits. In total, more than 88 million adults have at least one significant educational barrier. (See Figure 1.)

With a current U.S. labor force of about 150 million,\* a disturbing number of prime working-age adults will likely fall behind in their struggle to get jobs and higher wage jobs, or to qualify for college or job training that will help them advance in the workplace.

**Figure 1**  
88 Million Adults Have At Least One Education Barrier



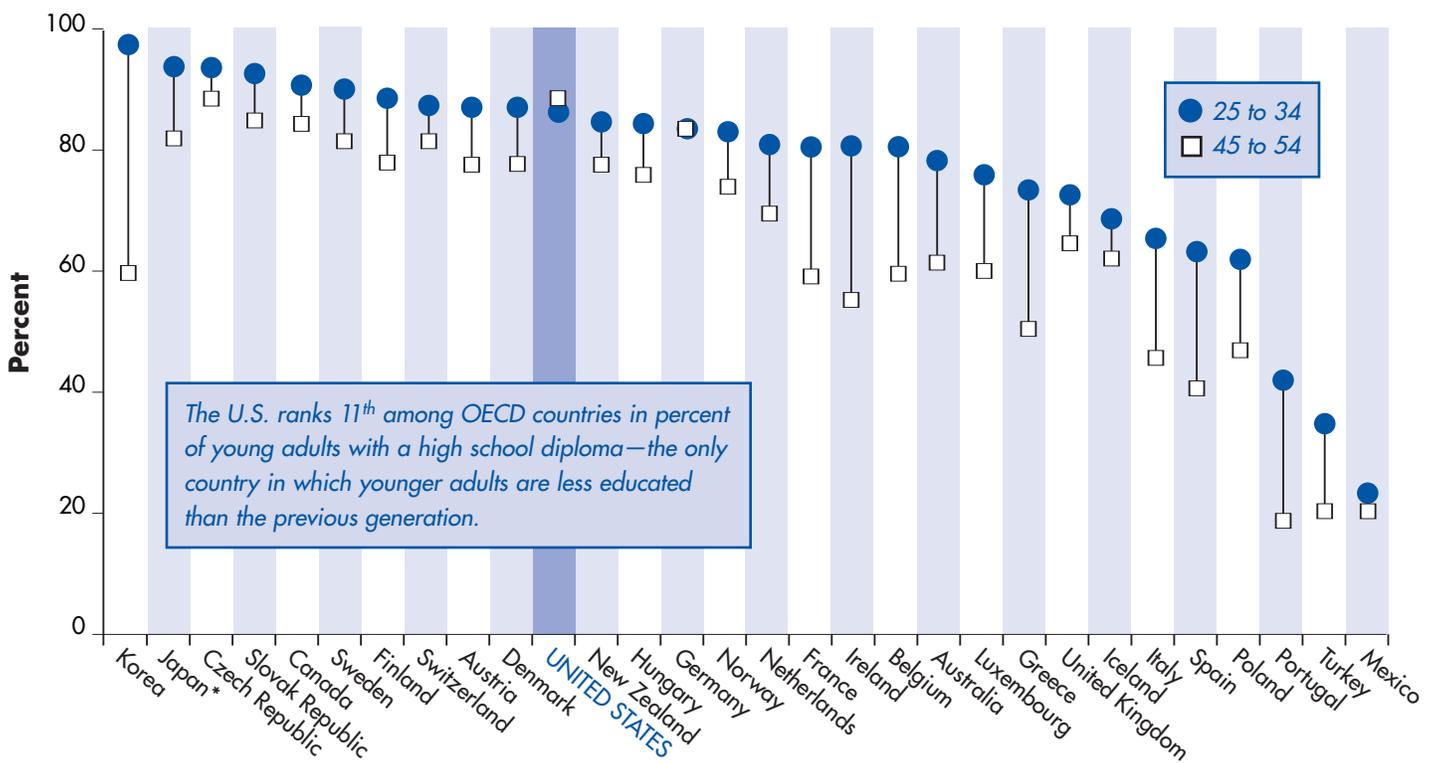
*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (Public Use Microdata Samples); prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Unduplicated population = 88,003,964.

\*150 million people in the labor force are age 16 and older. *Source:* 2006 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

America is losing its place as a world leader in education. In fact, as a nation, we are becoming *less* educated. Among the 30 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—countries that subscribe to the principles of representative democracy and a free-market economy—the United States ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the percentage of adults with a high school diploma and is the *only* country where younger adults are less educated than the previous generation. (See Figure 2.) This trend runs counter to the American tradition of education for all. It undermines the American belief that each succeeding generation should be better educated and enjoy a higher quality of life than the one before it.

Moreover, the United States is losing ground to other countries in educational attainment in terms of high school diplomas and two- and four-year college degrees awarded.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 2**  
High School Attainment of Younger and Older Adults—U.S. and OECD Countries, 2005



Source: Education at a Glance, 2007, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

\*Japan data is from 2004.

**RISK 1: *Dropout Rates Are Staggering***

For years, the nation's efforts to ensure that more students graduate from high school have failed. Far too many students leave high school before graduation. Every year, one in three young adults—more than 1.2 million people—drops out of U.S. high schools.<sup>3</sup> The problem shows no signs of abating. Unless these adults reengage in education, dropping out will haunt them, their families, and our economy for the rest of their lives.

Even more alarming, many students who *do* complete high school are deficient in basic skills and job and college readiness. Some 40 percent of all college students take at least one remedial course (at an estimated cost to taxpayers of \$1 billion), while 63 percent of two-year college students take at least one remedial course.<sup>4</sup>

**RISK 2: *Low Parent Education Deters Children's Learning***

Today, one in four U.S. working families is low-income, and one in five American children lives in poverty. And in many of those households, the parents or caregivers are employed, but they lack the education and skills necessary to earn family-sustaining wages.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence accumulated over decades shows that improving the educational levels of mothers also improves children's ability to learn and succeed in school. Nevertheless, state and federal policies and funding for family literacy services for the most at-risk parents and children remain lackluster at best.

**RISK 3: *Low Literacy in Burgeoning Prison Population***

One in every 100 U.S. adults 16 and older is incarcerated.<sup>6</sup> Three of every 100 males aged 18 to 34 are incarcerated. Of the 2.3 million people behind bars in state and federal prisons and local jails in 2006, about 43 percent of 18- to 60-year-olds lack a high school diploma or its equivalent.<sup>7</sup> Further, the 2005 NAAL survey reported that 56 percent of inmates function at the two lowest levels of prose literacy.\* And a 2004 report by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy states that "during the course of a year, between 10 and 12 million people are admitted to jails alone; about the same number released from jail—in a kind of revolving door phenomenon."<sup>8</sup>

This large prison population—along with another 5.5 million ex-offenders who are on probation and parole—has stretched public resources to the maximum, thus limiting investments in education and workforce training.

\*Prose literacy is defined by NAAL as the knowledge and skills needed to search, comprehend, and use information from continuous texts. [NAAL also surveyed literacy proficiency according to two other measures: document literacy (the ability to search, comprehend, and use information from noncontinuous texts in various formats), and quantitative literacy (the ability to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials).]



Yet, whether literate or unskilled, 95 percent of incarcerated individuals return to our communities.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult enough for them to find jobs when burdened with a prison record, but without education and basic skills, it is nearly impossible.

The number of incarcerated individuals continues to rise, but investments in corrections education do not. In spite of rising prison populations, the U.S. Department of Education capped the adult education funding for incarcerated adults in 1998 at 10 percent of the state grants. The result is a decrease in state expenditures from \$38.6 million in 1997 to \$30.3 million in 2004, the latest year for which data is available.<sup>10</sup> This amounts to about \$13 per incarcerated person.

**RISK 4: *Extensive Need for English Language Instruction***

The Census Bureau expects that between 2000 and 2015, net international migration will account for more than half of our nation's population growth, with significant effects on the composition of the workforce and the general population.<sup>11</sup>

The Hispanic share of the U.S. population is expected to increase from 14 percent in 2005 to slightly more than 20 percent by 2030.<sup>12</sup> By 2030, more than one of every four people in America will be of Asian or Hispanic origin.<sup>13</sup> This growth will likely increase the demand for English language programs in the nation's adult education and literacy system.

Currently, one-third of foreign-born adults, and 44 percent of Hispanic Americans, do not have a high school diploma. And almost 80 percent of immigrants who have not earned a diploma report not speaking English well or at all.<sup>14</sup>

Every year, almost two million immigrants come to the United States from all over the world to seek job opportunities and better lives for their families. As Figure 1 shows, 13 million adults faced challenges of both language and literacy in 2006. But low literacy levels, as well as a lack of high school education and English language skills, severely hinder up to one million of these immigrants in their attempts to earn family-sustaining wages. The need and demand for ESL\* services far outstrips the supply of programs and qualified teachers. Moreover, research clearly shows that the rate of citizenship increases with education attainment.<sup>15</sup>

\*The ESL acronym used in this report refers to English as a second language instructional services, sometimes referred to as English for speakers of other languages.



### **RISK 5: Demographic Shifts**

We are in the midst of profound demographic change in America, which compounds the situation described. If our basic skills problems remain unaddressed, this may create serious challenges to our national unity and national security.

High dropout rates, the number of individuals with limited proficiency in English language and literacy, and the aging U.S. population will have powerful effects on the economic future of America.

It is well documented that the U.S. ranks near the top in international comparisons in “inequality.” In comparison with 21 other countries surveyed in 2000,<sup>16</sup> America scores among the highest in terms of the number of persons at the high end of literacy proficiency. But it also scores among the highest in terms of the number at the lowest end. Countries that outperform the U.S. have distributions spread more evenly across all population segments and income levels. This inequality affects all Americans, and is in itself a serious problem.

Relatedly, the NAAL survey indicates that minority groups are disproportionately at the low end in educational attainment. For example, Hispanics and blacks scored well below Asian/Pacific Islanders and whites on all NAAL measures.<sup>17</sup> While faring better, Asian Americans also scored lower than non-Hispanic whites. In prose literacy, as measured by NAAL, the percentage of adults in various racial/ethnic groups that scored at the “below basic” level were: 44 percent of Hispanics, 24 percent of blacks, 14 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 7 percent of whites. The corresponding numbers in document and quantitative literacy were similarly disproportionate: 36 and 50 percent respectively for Hispanic adults, 25 and 47 percent for blacks, 11 and 19 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 8 and 13 percent for whites.\*

Data from the National Congress of American Indians indicates that American Indians and Alaska Natives are affected in disproportionately large numbers compared to all other groups. They are at an educational disadvantage at every stage of schooling through high school and their high school dropout rate is higher than all other groups as well.<sup>18</sup>

*A looming question is whether we will continue to grow apart or, as a nation, we will invest in policies that help us to grow together.... While new policies focusing on education and skill will not solve all the challenges associated with existing inequalities, if our society's overall levels of learning and skill are not increased and the existing gaps are not narrowed, there is little chance that economic opportunities will improve among key segments of our population.*

—The Perfect Storm

\*Black and Hispanic groups each made up 12 percent of the adult population, while Asian/Pacific Islanders and whites were 4 and 70 percent respectively.



Aging is always a factor in demographic transitions. In 2006, the last year data was available, 8,000 people turned 60 every day.<sup>19</sup> As these “baby boomers” leave the workforce, their places are taken by the smaller cohort of workers born in the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, the U.S. workforce is increasing more slowly and, without intervention, is likely to become less educated on average. The slower expansion of the labor force, all other things being equal, implies slower growth of potential output, but workforce education programs are lacking that could help cushion the impact of this demographic transition on economic and productivity growth.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. The New Landscape

In the past, adults with limited proficiency in English language and literacy were able to tap into an ample supply of well-paying jobs in such fields as manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. But many of those jobs are now in shorter supply or have moved overseas.

*Education really is the new coin of the realm. It's the new form of capital in this country, on this planet.*

—Former Virginia Gov. Gerald Baliles

Compounding the problem, the warp-speed advance of technology has altered the U.S. job market in profound ways, creating a borderless world in which the Internet enables global competitors to vie for the jobs of even the most well-educated, highly skilled U.S. workers. One result is that the high school diploma is no longer the basic ticket for entry into the workplace.

Times have changed and so must our thinking. Until now, the national approach to improving skills and basic education has focused on preschool through grade 12 or postsecondary education. While both are imperative, this is only part of a broader—and critically necessary—solution to our national educational needs.

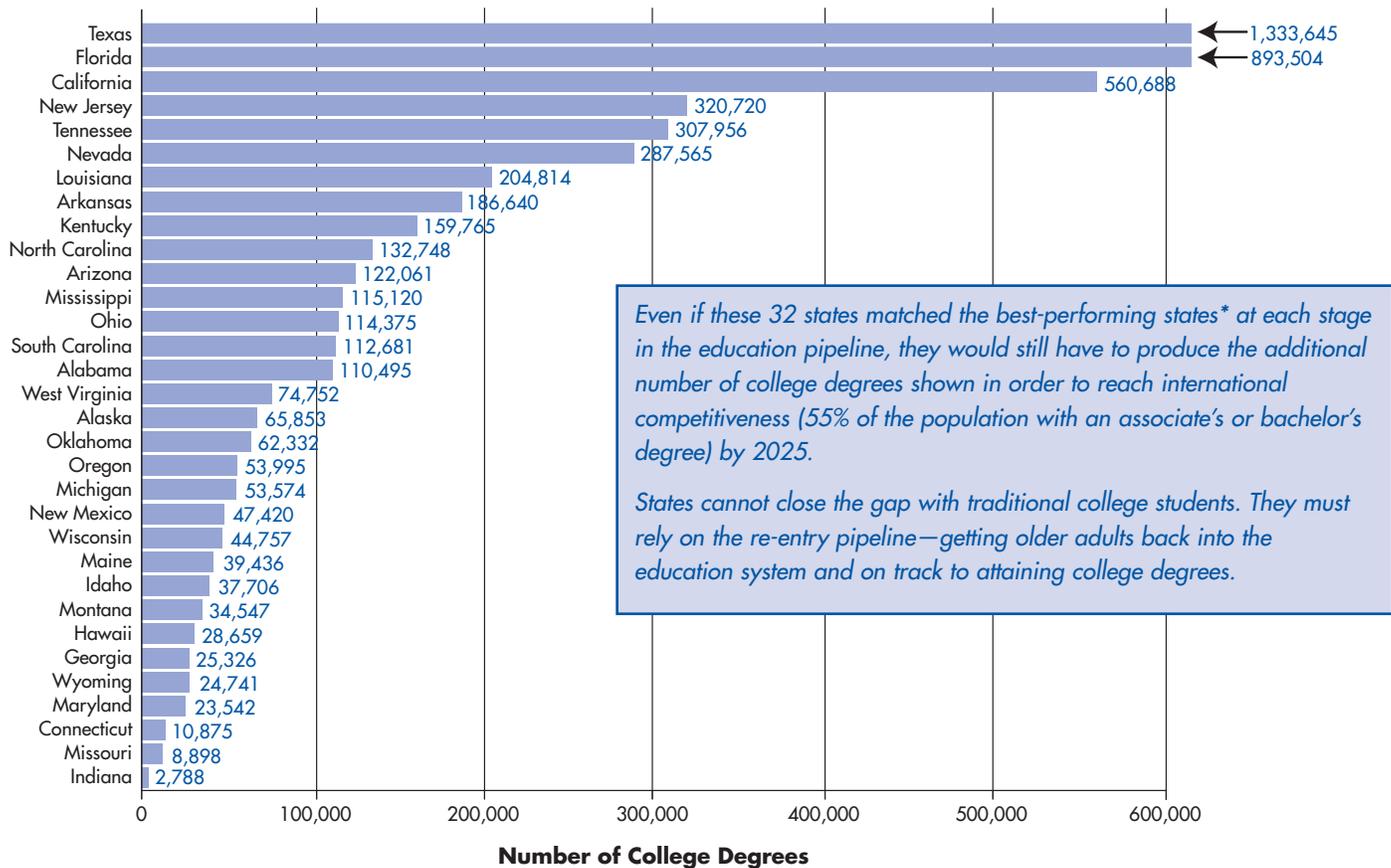
Today, more than two-thirds of our workforce is *already* beyond the reach of the schools.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants yet to arrive make up another sizeable portion. A report by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) indicates that the U.S. as a whole—and 32 individual states—cannot reach an internationally competitive level in the attainment of associate and bachelor degrees (55 percent of the adult population) if they continue focusing on traditional college students. (See Figure 3.) *Even if every state's high school graduation and college-going rates were equal to the top states in the country today, the United States still will not be able to meet its demand for skilled workers.*<sup>22</sup>

There is only one way to reestablish America's education heritage and ensure a sound national economy, today and in the years ahead: *We must bring adults back into the education system—and put them on track to earning certificates and degrees, and to qualifying for jobs at family-sustaining wages.*<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 3**

**32 States Need More Adults With College Degrees to Reach International Competitiveness**



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 ACS Public Use Microdata Samples and Population Projections; NCES, IPEDS Completions Survey 2004-05; prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).*

*\*The best performing states at each stage of the pipeline: NJ, UT, and ND (high school graduation rates); SD, NY, and ND (college-going rates); ND, SD, and MT (associate degrees per FTE enrollment); and WA, CA, and AZ (bachelor's degrees per FTE enrollment).*

This is a tall order, but it is what the U.S. job market demands. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that between 2004 and 2014, 24 of the 30 fastest growing occupations will require workers with postsecondary education or training. And future prospects for jobs in middle-skill categories (jobs that require more than high-school, but less than a four-year degree, including on-the-job training) will likely remain quite robust relative to the supply, especially in key sectors of the economy. It is forecast that middle-skill jobs will generate about 40 percent of the total openings over the next decade. Jobs requiring a high school diploma or less will grow by only 10 percent, although they will still account for about 40 percent of job openings. Roughly half of all employment today is still in the middle-skill occupations.<sup>24</sup>



If America fails to produce those workers, the global market will furnish them, off our shores or over the Internet. And if America fails to educate new workers from the adult ranks, nearly half of the U.S. workforce—88 million of 188 million adults aged 18 to 64—will continue to struggle with only a high school education or less and with low English proficiency. Large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy, rather than a positive economic force.

#### 4. Current Solutions Fall Short

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA)—designed to encourage collaboration between workforce and adult education services—has failed to deliver on its promise.

Fewer low-skilled adults are being trained under WIA Title I and Title II programs.\* The number of adults receiving training under the Department of Labor’s Title I workforce investment programs declined 26 percent between 1998 and 2004.<sup>25</sup> The number of adults enrolled in Title II adult education and literacy programs has declined as well according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, there is little collaboration among Title I and II programs, and eligibility and accountability measures vary among programs designed to serve similar populations.

***Fewer Low-Income and Low-Skilled Participants.*** Only 189,000 individuals exited Title I training programs in 2006, even though nearly \$4 billion was allocated to them.<sup>26</sup> The number of adults exiting Title I job training programs who were low-income declined by almost half from 1998 to 2007—from 96 percent to 53.7 percent. Between April 2006 and March 2007, only 23.4 percent of exiting adult program participants who received training services had less than a high school diploma, compared to 46.2 percent who were high school graduates, 23.1 percent who had completed some postsecondary education, and 7.3 percent who were four-year college graduates.<sup>27</sup>

***Inadequate ESL Training.*** WIA Title I performance measures—and failure to target those adults most in need of services—have led to fewer participants in ESL services. From April 2006 to March 2007, less than 4 percent of exiting participants were low-level English speakers. Moreover, although adult education and ESL are allowable training activities under WIA when provided in conjunction with other types of training, between April 2006 and March 2007, only 4.2 percent of those exiting programs received adult education or ESL, and fewer than 1 percent who received intensive ESL or training services between 2004 and 2005 were co-enrolled with adult education.<sup>28</sup>

***Poor Data Sharing and Tracking.*** Different accountability measures and lack of data sharing among WIA Title I and Title II agencies and other federal programs are barriers to determining outcomes for participants. Several papers prepared for this study (see Appendix 5)

\*For purposes of this report, WIA Title I refers to the adult program, dislocated worker program, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and out-of-school youth. Title II is the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

provide compelling evidence about the lack of coordination and planning among federally funded adult education and workforce development programs. Lack of common data measures between the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor is of special concern because they operate by far the largest federal adult education and training programs.

In addition, few states track education and economic outcomes for lower-skilled adults over time, and across adult education, workforce training and postsecondary education services, or into employment. As a result, states lack the program and labor market data they need to align and integrate education and training services for lower-skilled adults—and to tie these services more closely to employer and workforce needs.

***Insufficient, Fragmented Funding.*** Current federal and state investments in workforce and adult education and literacy services are inadequate to meet the need. Although 88 million adults aged 18 to 64 have a high school diploma or less, or limited English proficiency, funds provided by the U.S. Department of Education for Title II adult education and literacy services have been less than \$500 million annually since 2006.

Funds are allocated to states based on the number of adults who lack a high school diploma in each state. States are required to match 25 percent of the federal grant. One of the problems the formula poses is that states may satisfy their match in ways other than cash—such as by providing in-kind services.

WIA Title I funds, on the other hand, while flowing directly to states, do not require a state match. Like federal funding for adult education and literacy services, funding levels for workforce programs have decreased over the years.<sup>29</sup>

Total state funding for adult education and literacy in 2008 is about \$1.6 billion, approximately three times the federal grant amount. (See Appendix 6.) That number is deceptive because state appropriations vary widely, resulting in uneven services across the country. In fact, just three states—California, Florida, and New York—provide 65 percent of all state funding in the United States, and represent 50 percent of all state and federal funding combined. And while five states and one territory do not meet the 25 percent match requirement, they nevertheless receive federal funds.

The net result is that the amount of federal funding a state receives for adult education services can greatly affect the quality of their services and size of enrollments—especially in cases where state governments contribute less. Such variances in state funding support have produced inconsistent and unequal adult education services across the country.



***Declining Enrollment in Adult Education.*** Overall enrollment in U.S. adult education programs has declined. In the Department of Education’s state grant program, only 2.4 million adults were enrolled in 2006–2007. (See Appendix 7.) That is a decrease of nearly 10 percent since 2001, and a fraction of the 88 million adults with at least one educational challenge.

As Appendix 7 shows, enrollment is highest in ESL, with 1.1 million adults accounting for 46 percent of total enrollments in 2006–2007. Demand for ESL continues to outstrip capacity, with several states reporting waiting times up to three years for classes in some locations.<sup>30</sup> Despite increasing need in some states, the Department of Education grant formula for ESL services is based on the number of adults without high school diplomas, an inadequate measure to determine ESL needs.

Enrollment in ABE (adult basic education, reading and/or math levels below eighth grade) in 2006–2007 was 38 percent of total enrollments, or about 900,000. Only 16 percent, or 391,896 adults, were enrolled in adult secondary education (ASE)—the level of preparation leading to a high school equivalency or GED. Considering the low enrollment in ASE, it is not surprising that few GED students entering postsecondary education have taken an adult education class. Furthermore, many adult education programs are not equipped to deliver support services, such as counseling, to the many people who need them, thus reducing persistence and movement toward college and job training readiness.<sup>31</sup>

***Lack of Alignment—Curricula, Assessments, and Systems.*** There is little if any alignment between instructional content and assessments used in the adult education programs and between assessments and postsecondary standards required for enrollment and placement in credit-bearing courses. Consequently, current practices should be reviewed in order to chart a new and more relevant direction. The content of adult education curricula and assessments must be in alignment with the content and skills required on commonly used college placement tests.<sup>32</sup>

***The GED Has Not Kept Pace.*** Passing the GED has long been regarded as an important educational outcome for adult education students. Individuals who pass the test are presumed eligible to pursue postsecondary education.

Some 50 percent of the GED candidates indicate they plan to enroll in college at the time they take the GED, but few actually do so. Only 27 percent of GED graduates nationally have enrolled in postsecondary education, compared with about 63 percent nationally of high school diploma holders.<sup>33</sup>

About 85 percent of GED graduates who do enroll in postsecondary education must take at least one remedial course, which lengthens the time it takes them to earn a credential or degree and increases instructional costs.<sup>34</sup> Far too many high school graduates must also take remedial courses, with remedial math being the most frequently taken by either group.<sup>35</sup> While the GED

score requirements ensure that GED candidates are able to read, compute, interpret information, and express themselves in writing at a level exceeding at least 40 percent of graduating high school seniors,<sup>36</sup> the data suggest that a minimum passing score on the GED is not a predictor of postsecondary readiness.

On average, 55 percent of adults scoring at the lowest literacy level in NAAL were adults with less than high school or lacking a GED. Yet fewer adults are earning a GED today than in 1995. (See Appendix 8.) Of the 39 million adults aged 16 and older without a high school diploma, only 400,000 individuals, or 1.5 percent, earned a GED in 2006 (Appendix 9). While GED attainment is one goal of federally funded adult education and literacy programs, just 30 percent of the nation's GED graduates in 2006 studied for the test through federally funded adult education programs (Appendix 7). By all accounts, much preparation for the GED takes place outside of formal adult education programs. Other kinds of delivery models may be needed to reach many adult learners.<sup>37</sup>

Many employers require the GED for hiring purposes. Yet while the GED serves as a gateway credential for postsecondary enrollment and eligibility for Pell grants, few states set goals for GED attainment and transition to postsecondary education, and few track progress over time.

There are notable exceptions. Kentucky, for example, tracks GED recipients who enroll in postsecondary education within two years of passing the GED. Since data tracking began in 2001, adults transitioning from adult education into postsecondary education—mainly to community colleges—increased by 36 percent through 2006.

GED holders appear to take much longer than traditional college students to begin and complete their postsecondary education, and so many of their long-term postsecondary outcomes do not fully appear in the relatively short-term tracking studies.<sup>38</sup>

***Lack of Teacher Certification and Benefits.*** High-quality instruction is essential to foster student retention and produce successful outcomes. But salaries for adult educators are low, and many positions lack benefits. This limits the pool of potential instructors and leads to high turnover.

While many adult education instructors are credentialed for K–12 teaching, few states require that adult education teachers show mastery of the specialized knowledge and skills needed to teach adults. Moreover, states have not established certification systems to ensure that all instructors have this ability. Worse yet, the majority of adult educators nationwide are working part-time, often as a second job. This is another clear sign that adult education is not considered a serious professional enterprise.<sup>39</sup>



Lack of high-quality instruction is of concern for all students, particularly adults with learning disabilities<sup>40</sup> and others with special education needs. Adult education instructors need at least introductory skills in recognizing the need to make referrals to appropriate agencies for further diagnosis.

## 5. The Bottom Line

If we remain on our current path—given the continued rate of high school dropouts, the growing number of immigrants who are limited English proficient, and the low number of adults enrolled in adult education and moving along paths to postsecondary education and occupational training—our problems will only escalate. And by 2020, the nation will have to bear the burden of meeting the needs of an *even larger pool of adults* with low skills and language deficiencies. We cannot begin too soon.

## Section B. GOING TO SCALE: 20 Million by 2020

We can continue to overlook the educational needs of working-age adults, undermining the current and future economic prosperity of our nation and states. Or, with bold, creative thinking and a solid plan, our nation can reinvent itself, and retain its place as a world leader—economically, socially, and democratically.

**RECOMMENDATION:** *The National Commission on Adult Literacy calls for transforming the adult education and literacy system into an adult education and workforce skills system with the capacity to effectively serve 20 million adults annually by the year 2020.*

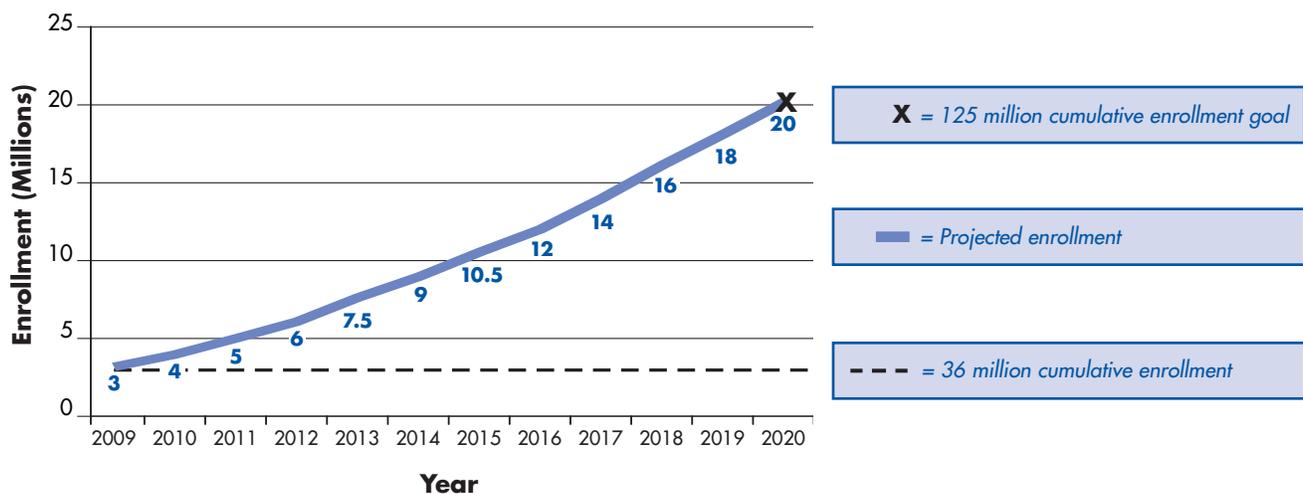
**RECOMMENDATION:** *Congress and state governments should set the mission of the adult education and workforce skills system to attainment of postsecondary and workforce readiness.*

To prepare substantially more adults for postsecondary education and workforce readiness, we need an aggressive approach that leads to the acquisition of credentials, certificates, and degrees.<sup>41</sup> Building capacity to serve 20 million adults by 2020 will require annual enrollment gains, with corresponding improvement of system infrastructure and funding based on measurable outcomes.

If we estimate total “system” enrollment of 3 million in 2008 (including relevant Department of Education and Labor programs, plus other federal adult education programs), and take that as a starting point that will hold constant over the next 12 years, then, as Figure 4 shows, 20 million adults enrolled annually by 2020 would be a cumulative service level 3.5 times greater than we have now. At the levels shown in the figure, by the year 2020, system capacity will have increased by seven times.

**Figure 4**

“20 Million by 2020” – Adult Education and Workforce Skills System Projected Enrollment





Projected enrollment reflects a wide range of scenarios. Adults at the lowest literacy levels may be enrolled many years and may “stop in and stop out” of the system. Those with both ESL and literacy needs require intense, longer-term instruction. Adults lacking a high school diploma need varying amounts of time to acquire a GED. Adults with high school diplomas and incumbent workers may need shorter-term, intensive/occupational specific skills training. And the mix of needs and actual enrollment numbers will change at points along the way as a result of immigration patterns, high school completion rates, and adults enrolling in college and job training.

**Service Venues.** To enroll 20 million adults by 2020, America must deliver services in a variety of ways through many different venues—for example, community-based organizations (CBOs), libraries, out-of-school youth services, the correctional education system, school districts, the community college system, collaborations with labor and business, one-stops, and, on a whole new scale, technology-based instruction. All types of service providers, to be eligible for public funding, need to be consistent in reporting on and meeting expected outcomes.

Community colleges, in particular, must be positioned to move to the forefront as a service provider, and they must be funded to do so. Most adult students who begin their postsecondary education at four-year institutions have high school diplomas; an equal number of students beginning associate degrees at two-year institutions have GEDs or high school diplomas; and most students who begin certificate programs at two-year colleges or less do not have either high school diplomas or GEDs.<sup>42</sup>

The importance of postsecondary institutions cannot be overstated. Community colleges are not just feeder institutions for higher levels of education. They are vital educational forces in their communities. They now provide a third of adult education service in the country,<sup>43</sup> but they must do more. Four-year colleges and universities have unique contributions to make as well—through research, development of teachers and other professionals, and curriculum development.

**Cost Requirements.** We need a substantial increase in public funding to support the new Adult Education and Workforce Skills System and drive its enrollment increases to 20 million adults annually. The Commission calls for a public expenditure to reach \$20 billion by 2020. As outcomes are achieved, levels of funding after 2020 can be revised, depending on need and priorities at the time.

The \$20 billion figure, an average of just \$1,000 per enrollee by 2020, is only about five times more than current public expenditures on adult education and workforce training programs of Titles I and II. Moreover, compared to other public outlays on the scale proposed, it is a relatively modest sum. For example, the U.S. spends more than \$1 trillion annually on criminal victimization and operation of the criminal justice system.\*

\* *The Aggregate Burden of Crime*, Journal of Law and Economics, Vol. XLII, Oct. 1999, pp. 611-642.

**Dollar General Corporation provides an opportunity for its customers to donate**

their spare change to adult literacy through an in-store coin collection container. In 2007, the generosity of Dollar General customers was extraordinary. They donated more than \$11 million in spare pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters to help individuals learn to read, prepare for the GED, or learn the English language. Money collected is donated by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation to nonprofit organizations providing adult basic education and literacy instruction. Since 1993, the Foundation has funded programs serving more than one million individuals and families.

For information: 615-855-5201.

Funding at this \$20 billion level requires much more efficient uses by both federal and state government of the billions in current public funding. For example, numerous federal departments operate programs with adult education and workforce skills components,<sup>44</sup> especially (but not limited to) the Departments of Education and Labor. Congress should look across the departments to better align and connect existing services and to maximize available resources. The Department of Education currently allocates less than \$500 million annually for state adult education grants, while Title I funds for adult education and training (e.g., dislocated workers, at-risk youth, the trade adjustment assistance, and adult programs) total nearly \$3.2 billion.

To be most effective and efficient, we must move away from siloed programs with different eligibility requirements, different reporting systems, and different performance metrics. Improved coordination and joint planning would result in integration of services and missions.

***Innovative Thinking.*** We also will need *new* funding even beyond the \$20 billion level—especially for research, technology, and public awareness. Corporate and general philanthropic sources must become partners in this national effort. It will take our most creative thinking to reach the necessary funding levels—such as providing indirect federal funding through tax credits and launching public-private collaborations to leverage financial resources. The Commission finds merit in the idea of a National Trust or National Training Fund. We strongly urge Congress to develop such an option. This new entity would accept and distribute public and private funds to support development of the program infrastructure and improvement of adult education attainment.



**Producing Results.** As enrollments in the new Adult Education and Workforce Skills System increase, we must strive to achieve various educational and job outcomes (see Table 1). While setting and achieving enrollment goals is an important first step, the hallmark of the new system will be measuring the number of adults who achieve GEDs, English language proficiency, credentials, and workforce certificates; transition to postsecondary education and job training; and enroll in incumbent worker basic skills programs. The System should also measure and report employment and wage gains of participants across programs. Success should not be based on time enrolled in programs, but on whether individuals have mastered the instructional content and achieved their outcome goals.

The Commission believes that student progress and achieved outcomes should be measured and reported at the state and national levels. It is the only way to determine the overall effectiveness of the nation’s collective adult education and workforce programs and their impact on the lives of millions of adults. There is no precise way to project annual achievements in the various outcome areas for 2020, but the Commission believes it reasonable to aim for the levels indicated in Table 1:

**Table 1**  
Current and Projected National Outcomes

	CURRENT	PROJECTED ANNUAL GOALS BEGINNING 2020
Adults with earned GEDs	400,000 <sup>a</sup>	2 million
Adults with advanced ESL proficiency	147,129 <sup>b</sup>	3 million
Adults transitioning to postsecondary education	44,713 <sup>b</sup>	6 million
Adults with earned workforce certificates	268,500 <sup>c</sup>	2 million
Adults enrolled in basic skills incumbent worker training	29,000 <sup>d</sup>	3 million

*Note: Some enrolled adults may not achieve outcomes; some may achieve multiple outcomes.*

<sup>a</sup>GED Testing Service, 2006.

<sup>b</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Reporting System, 2006–2007.

<sup>c</sup>Based on ACT National Career Readiness Certificate; National Work Readiness Credential.

<sup>d</sup>James Parker, Workplace Education: Twenty State Perspectives; based on data from the National Reporting System 2006–07.

## ACTION ROADMAP

### 1. A New Federal Act, A New Mission

**ACTION:** *Congress should pass and the President should sign a comprehensive new **Adult Education and Economic Growth Act to overhaul and expand adult education and workforce skills training.***

- ~ This new Act should be bold in scale and crafted to excite the public imagination—similar in scope and intended impact to such great legislative accomplishments as the original GI Bill, the National Defense Student Loan Program, or the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act.
- ~ The new Act should connect and coordinate essential elements of Titles I and II of the Workforce Investment Act and align them with postsecondary education entrance requirements—especially with community colleges. The Act should also incorporate the adult education and basic workforce preparation programs of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and of other federal programs.
- ~ The new Act should create an Adult Education and Workforce Skills System to develop and connect adult education and workforce programs to meet the education and employment needs of out-of-school youth and adults. Resources must be focused on new goals and learning outcomes at higher levels, and on moving adults toward credentials, certificates, and readiness for postsecondary education and workforce training.
- ~ The new Act should center on the principles of federal-state partnerships in which both entities provide resources—and on shared goals and outcomes. The federal government should marshal new funding, and drive incentives in such a way that state actions benefit the entire nation. *This is a markedly different approach from the current workforce and adult education strategy of making grants to states with no requirement to benefit the country as a whole.*<sup>45</sup>
- ~ The new System should be anchored by a large-scale national data system and repository coordinated across federal and state adult education and workforce skills programs.
- ~ The new System should coordinate education- and employment-related services. It should align goals, performance metrics, and accountability measures across these programs to optimize performance and results.
- ~ The new System should focus on and be responsive to labor demands and needs.



## 2. Focusing Programs on Priority Needs

**ACTION:** *The new Act should focus service on the needs of the unemployed; low-skilled incumbent workers; immigrants with limited or no English; parents or caregivers with low basic skills; incarcerated adults; high-school dropouts; and high school graduates not ready for college.*

***High School Dropouts and Graduates With No College.*** Many jobs in the middle and higher-skill range require some postsecondary education, yet more than 69 million U.S. adults have education below the postsecondary level, and an additional 13 million individuals also lack proficiency in English. Services through the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System must span a range of literacy and language levels, provide instruction in context to individual and occupational needs, and provide it in accessible and accelerated formats. The Act should:

- ~ Establish mentoring components to improve postsecondary persistence and create occupational and career supports within the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System to maximize personal and academic success.
- ~ Create dual enrollment/dual credit integrated programs to shorten the time needed to earn a credential, achieve multiple learning outcomes, and increase the number of earned credentials, certificates, and degrees.
- ~ Invest in professional development and increase the quality of professional development offerings, validate instructor competence, and elevate the quality and status of instructors.
- ~ Provide incentives to adults to participate in education and reward their achievement of goals and outcomes.

***English as a Second Language.*** The number of immigrants with limited or no English language skills warrants an increased focus on ESL as a critical element of adult education programs. The Act should:

- ~ Allocate federal funds for ESL to states by a formula based on need—as measured by percentage of adults by state who speak English less than very well.
- ~ Require the System to align and integrate ESL with postsecondary education and workforce skills training to increase the attainment of credentials that lead to higher wage jobs.
- ~ Require programs to make available instruction in civics and citizenship as a core element of adult education programs.

***Corrections Education.*** The Act should implement the following measures for incarcerated adults and ex-offenders, for the good of the individuals and the society to which they return:

- ~ Establish federal and state policies that require offenders to work toward a high school equivalency while incarcerated.

- ~ Increase federal funding and allocate it to states by a formula based on need.
- ~ Establish data collection and outcomes that are developed and shared at the federal and state levels and across programs.
- ~ Integrate high-quality adult/postsecondary/vocational skills programs.
- ~ Support employer training and partnerships to increase the availability of jobs and employment opportunities upon release.

**Family Literacy.** New public policies should be initiated to encourage families to pursue education and transmit a culture of learning to their children. The Act should:

- ~ Allocate federal funding explicitly for family literacy services.
- ~ Call for states to provide for family literacy services in state legislation for an adult education and workforce skills system.
- ~ Collect comparable data about family literacy services, program types, funding, legislative provision, outcomes, and enrollments across state and national levels.

## Virginia: Model Public-Private Venture

In 2001, a slumping economy led to losses of jobs and income in Patrick County, a rural southern Virginia county of 19,000. In response, concerned current and former residents—including former Gov. Gerald Baliles—joined with civic and government leaders to form the Patrick County Educational Foundation.

The Foundation emphasizes education in the context of economic development. Through a three-pronged approach, the group aims to increase the number of adults with a high school diploma, bolster the number of high school graduates who go on to college, and update and expand the job skills of the county's workforce.

Thanks to effective fundraising, the Foundation is playing a major role in transforming lives and bringing hope to the community. Between 2003 and 2005, the first two years of

the initiative, the group's GED Promotion Project enabled nearly 200 adults to earn a GED, moving the county from 38th to 2nd out of 45 rural counties in the number of GED graduates per 1,000 residents.

The Foundation's College Access Program has served more than 2,500 students since 2002. Because of those efforts—and nearly \$700,000 in scholarships awarded by the Foundation, with an additional \$4.3 million secured from other sources for the students—86 percent of the class of 2007 planned to pursue postsecondary education. In addition, the Foundation's Workforce Training Program has trained more than 1,000 adults since 2003.

The Southern Regional Education Board has collaborated with the Foundation to share elements of the successful program for replication in other rural areas.



***Programs for Low-Skilled, Incumbent Workers.*** Current federal adult education policies and accountability measures limit use of federal funds for approved basic instructional services for incumbent workers (individuals already on the job). At least 12 states currently serve low-skilled adults through incumbent worker services with state funds—and some make an effort to serve adult workers on the job, using federal funds. Programs designed to integrate adult education with high-level skills typically offered by community colleges are even more rare. Lack of federal emphasis and confusion about how states report enrollment and outcomes make it difficult to determine the effectiveness and extent of these programs.<sup>46</sup>

The Commission recommends:

- ~ Public and private sector partnerships, matching grants, and incentives to employers to spur incumbent worker training for low-skilled adults.
- ~ Increased use of workforce assessments and certifications.
- ~ Federal incentives to states that create workforce training alliances among adult education programs, community colleges, business, labor, and other training providers.

### 3. Resetting Definitions and Program Goals; Improving Access

To meet the demand for skilled workers today and in coming years, more adults will have to attain credentials leading to marketable postsecondary certificates and degrees, and specific workforce training. The Adult Education and Workforce Skills System should set the same high standards for adults as expected for today's high school students.

***ACTION.*** *The new Act should redefine the fundamentals of adult education, set program goals and encourage states to do so, and offer incentives and strategies to increase learner access.*

***Redefining the Basics.*** Under the Act, the System should continue to provide basic services for reading, writing, math, and English language proficiency. But it should also expand services to teach adults how to communicate, acquire information, think critically, solve problems, use technology, and work in teams. For that reason, both federal and state government should place increased emphasis on career exploration, counseling services, and instruction designed according to job or other contexts in which it will be used (contextual education). Providers will have to gear up to offer this wider range of services, and develop partnerships with employment, human resource development, and vocational rehabilitation services.

***Setting Program Goals.*** Federal and state government also must set enrollment goals for all programs in the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System—as well as goals for high school equivalency/GED; workforce certifications; transition to postsecondary education without remediation; ESL proficiency to the advanced level; citizenship attainment; acquisition of basic and transferable workplace skills; and employment, retention in employment, and wage gains.

**Increasing Postsecondary Access.** Our new 21<sup>st</sup> Century bill—the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act—must generate maximum levels of participation and completion by adult learners. The Commission believes that every adult in America should have the opportunity to acquire services that lead to at least postsecondary and workforce readiness. To achieve this, the Act must provide more adult learning opportunities through:

- ~ Programs that offer accelerated and integrated basic and occupational skills.
- ~ Integrated ESL and postsecondary courses.
- ~ Co-enrollment in adult education and postsecondary courses.
- ~ Workplace-based incumbent worker programs with skill training linked to labor market demands.
- ~ Technology and distance learning that allows adults to learn any time, at any place, at their own pace.

## Kentucky: Improving College Transition and Enrollment Rates

Six years ago in Louisville, KY, the leaders of Jefferson County Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education (JCPSACE) and Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC) realized they could attract and serve more students by working together. Their cooperation produced Educational Enrichment Services (EES), an innovative program that eases and encourages adult learners' transition to college.

JCTC refers students who need remediation to the free EES adult education classes, which are taught on the college campus. Students are able to access remedial education while remaining in a college environment and taking other developmental and/or college credit courses. Once students successfully complete their EES classes, they can move on to college full time.

More than 6,000 students have participated since the collaboration began in 2002. Retention rates have consistently exceeded 80 percent—and nearly half of students skip a semester or more of remedial coursework. In academic year 2006–2007, JCTC students taking adult education classes in lieu of developmental coursework saved a total of \$397,653 in tuition. Of the original 262 EES

students who enrolled in fall 2003, 97 students (37 percent) were still enrolled in the fall of 2007, compared to 16 percent of all first-time students from the fall of 2003. By 2007, EES students had earned eight associates degrees, nine diplomas, and forty-six certificates.

The success of the effort is due largely to monthly meetings between JCPSACE and JCTC leaders, and to the development of specialized curriculum written with the input of developmental faculty. The constant communication and shared data allow the partners to continuously refine EES offerings. Other community organizations—including the workforce investment board, social services, government, the business community, and faith-based organizations also provide support to the effort.

Today EES has expanded to include three other local universities—and has been recognized as a program of distinction by the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System has recommended that every community college in Kentucky replicate the transitions partnership demonstrated in Jefferson County.



*Strengthening Pell Grants and Financial Aid.* Lack of financial aid and inflexible eligibility requirements stand as barriers to adult participation in programs.<sup>47</sup>

Pell grants are the most promising means by which low-income individuals can enroll in postsecondary education. Pell should be available to working adults who seek to improve job skills through training and education. And financial aid should be structured for nontraditional students who require longer, more flexible study cycles.

States should consider allowing state student aid to be combined with Pell grants, up to the total cost of attendance. They should also make financial aid available to students who attend less than half time if they are enrolled in certificate or degree programs.

Pell grants are available to students lacking a high school diploma or GED, as long as the students pass an “ability to benefit” test showing that they have the skills needed to benefit from postsecondary education and training. State aid should be available on the same basis. Further, federal and state government should permit Pell grant recipients to enroll simultaneously in adult education, job training, and postsecondary education courses.

#### 4. Increasing Use of Instructional Technologies

**ACTION:** *Strong national leadership must be provided to develop and deploy **technology-assisted learning**, including the creation of a national Web portal for adult learners.*

Recent studies have called for a dramatically increased use of technology to improve education and training. In 2001, the Commission on Technology and Adult Learning recommended support for “a [technology] learning revolution that will clearly take place in the years ahead.”<sup>48</sup> But that advance is far behind schedule.

- ~ The Commission supports the use of public funds and private resources to achieve greater and more varied use of technology. We cannot reach the recommended 20 million goal by 2020 without providing access beyond classroom walls.

Technology should be used *in all its forms* to make learning a continuous process of inquiry and improvement that keeps pace with the speed of change in business and society. It can be used to create new models for teaching and learning, provide greater access and knowledge resources to adult students in real time, help working adults with childcare and transportation issues improve their education, provide training to instructors, improve program management and data collection, allow students to work and learn in virtual teams with video conferencing and collaboration software, and much more. It can put the highest quality teachers in the world at everyone’s doorstep.

With 73 percent of adults already online in 2006,<sup>49</sup> including those at lower levels of literacy, online learning can be a powerful way to assist adult learners. Touch screens and other user-friendly technologies can provide lower-skilled adults—even those with little or no computer experience—with access to electronic instruction. Bill Gates predicts that voice-activated computers will be the next revolution in technology. That technology may hold promise for low-skilled adults, including nonreaders.

***National Web Portal.*** Planned for fall 2008, U.S.A. Learns will be one step in the right direction. The free site is designed for adults with limited English language skills who cannot attend traditional classroom programs because of schedules, transportation, or other barriers.<sup>50</sup> U.S.A. Learns has the potential to become the cornerstone for a full-fledged portal, but there are no plans to include instructional materials for a broader range of adult learners.

The U.S. Department of Education and a consortium of states are funding Project IDEAL, administered through the University of Michigan. Project IDEAL is guiding state planning on best practices for technology use, and helping states to make appropriate choices among existing online curricula to use in their distance education programs. Currently, participating states have focused their energies on state-specific plans, rather than pursuing the feasibility of a national web portal.

## 5. Building Best Practices Through R&D

***ACTION:*** *For the new Act to be successful, Congress must provide significant support for a national, independent research and development program.*

***Focus on Best Practices.*** Research must focus on best practices and approaches that work. It must emphasize improvements to teaching, development of high-quality programs for the areas of need targeted by the Commission, and increasing successful outcomes for students—as measured by the expanded, redefined System’s new metrics. Examples of needed research areas are:

- ~ Exploring the feasibility of a college-ready skills certification for the new System, in collaboration with developmental/remedial postsecondary education professionals and researchers.
- ~ Determining how well CASAS and the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) used in adult education align with the AccuPlacer and Compass assessments used for community college placement.
- ~ Revising the GED to better align with workforce and postsecondary standards.
- ~ Exploring effective incentives for the incarcerated—such as “good time” for achievement in high school equivalency, credentials, and certificates.
- ~ Comparing differences in program effectiveness and outcomes among types of providers—schools, community-based organizations, community colleges, labor union training programs, libraries, and others.



- ~ Identifying and assessing the most effective educational technologies, as well as the potential role of technology in improving persistence and completion.
- ~ Conducting longitudinal studies of target populations to better understand transitions to postsecondary education, persistence and outcomes in adult education and workforce training, and long-term postsecondary outcomes for nontraditional postsecondary students.

*National Institute for Literacy.* The quasi-independent, interagency nature of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) makes it a unique and valuable resource, and positions it well to lead the federal research and development role, provide information and best-practice clearinghouse services for the nation, coordinate activities across departments and agencies, and engage the best minds of researchers and practitioners in both basic and applied research.

To achieve its potential, however, the National Institute's authority, capacity, and resources must be strengthened. The focus of NIFL shifted under WIA to teaching reading to children. Numerous independent entities exist for attending to the reading needs of children; NIFL is the only one that exists for adults.

- ~ The Commission urges Congress to restore the Institute to an exclusive focus on adult learners, as originally mandated in the National Literacy Act of 1991. It also urges that funding be provided for NIFL through a direct appropriation. NIFL should be held accountable through direct annual reporting to Congress.

## 6. State Planning and Coordination: Starting at the Top

To build the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System required for our future, and to achieve the transitions needed to postsecondary education and job training, the states have a special leadership responsibility, which demands attention at the highest levels.

*Planning and Coordination to Meet State Goals.* As at the federal level, many states have not fully developed effective links across agencies and programs that provide adult education and workforce skills services. As a result, services are disjointed, and adults who need help are confused about where to turn. What's more, few states have undertaken comprehensive planning of programs or services or taken meaningful steps to connect their adult education and workforce training services to economic development policies and plans.

**ACTION:** *States should engage in comprehensive planning and establish goals to improve education attainment and workforce skills of their adults in light of their economic development goals.*

**ACTION:** *States should legislate authority for coordination and alignment of systems consistent with their postsecondary education, workforce, and economic development goals. In some cases, a cross-agency planning body already exists; in others it may need to be created. In some states, a cabinet level position might be either established or strengthened. Whatever the approach, the involvement of the governor's office is essential.*

**ACTION:** *Under the new Act, new federal funds should be awarded to states following federal approval of a comprehensive adult education plan that each state develops and updates periodically for federal review. These new funds should be available for awards within the first year of passage of the new Act. States should be “held harmless” at current federal adult education grant levels.*

State plans should:

- ~ Align adult education, postsecondary education (especially community colleges), workforce development, and economic development plans.
- ~ Incorporate any unique features that reflect the needs and diversity of the state.
- ~ Have the approval of and be submitted by the state’s legislated policy and planning board.
- ~ Devise ways to share data across the adult education and workforce skills system including postsecondary education and other appropriate entities.

In each state, planners might begin by asking some basic questions about their state’s demographics, enrollments, and labor market needs. For example: (a) How many adults have at least one basic education challenge (no high school diploma, diploma only, no college, English language barriers)? (b) How many are working members of families with income less than a living wage, and what *constitutes* a living wage in the state? (c) How many are enrolled in adult education and workforce skills programs relative to the state’s need...earn a high school equivalency or GED each year...enroll in postsecondary education...and earn certificates or degrees? (d) How many participate in incumbent worker training? (e) Are state policies and funding adequate to meet projected labor market needs?

## Washington State: Streamlining the Path

Faced with a system that required years for low-skilled workers and non-English speakers to learn basic skills before beginning workforce training, leaders of Washington’s State Board of Community and Technical Colleges created a program in 2004 called Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST).

I-BEST prepares students for high-skill, high-wage jobs by integrating adult basic education with occupational/vocational training. ESL students comprise about 50 percent of the enrollment. Students are dual-enrolled in the adult education and community college systems. Class offerings range from one-quarter courses, to one-year certificate programs, to longer courses that lead to a college degree.

Before I-BEST, 5 to 10 percent of adult basic education (ABE) students went on to postsecondary education. Today, all I-BEST students are immediately enrolled in college as part of the program. In 2006–2007, 50 I-BEST programs were in place at 27 of Washington’s 34 community and technical colleges. Every college in the state is expected to have at least one approved I-BEST program by the end of 2007–2008.

Due to its success, the I-BEST program is now included in the governor’s budget request, and incorporated in the State Workforce Board’s strategic plan as a workforce development opportunity. The state’s Department of Corrections also has requested a pilot version for state prisons.



*Raising the Bar on Teacher Quality.* Adults deserve the same high-quality teaching and learning experiences as Pre-School and K–12 students. Adult education instructors must effectively use alternative teaching methods, such as context-based learning, and ensure that the curriculum and instruction are customized to meet the specific needs of students. By using curriculum and assessment standards informed by best practice and research, and giving much greater emphasis to teacher professional development, states can achieve program results that advance learners toward postsecondary and job readiness.

Adult education instructors must know and demonstrate the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and skills necessary to teach adults in the new System.

- ~ States should set standards and deadlines by which their adult education instructors can demonstrate qualifications to teach adult education, workforce skills, and adult ESL.
- ~ State (and federal) government should not only invest in training teachers to the required level but also provide incentives to them to invest in their own training and acquire appropriate credentials.

*Offering Guidance Services on a Whole New Scale.* Nearly 80 percent of the adults who did not complete high school are first-generation college-goers. First-generation college students are at high risk of not completing the college programs they start. Being the first in a family to go to college can be daunting, although research shows that the transition rates of first-generation GED and high school diploma holders are not much different. Yet programs do not consistently offer counseling and other support services. Adult Education and Workforce Skills programs should provide or be directly linked to college information and planning support services so that adults have the assistance they need to develop realistic transition plans.<sup>51</sup>

*Overcoming Access Barriers.* The millions of adults who could benefit under the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System are not always easy to reach. In many cases, they have already given up on the “system,” or the system has failed them. Accessible and affordable child care and lack of transportation are often barriers to participation. State plans should include multi-agency planning to minimize these barriers and maximize state and local coordination and resources. State plans should also consider innovative programs such as internships and academic multidisciplinary learning projects that lead to a high school diploma/GED and a vocational certificate in one program. Our new approach to adult learning and employment must offer ease of service—and real hope that learners can succeed.

## 7. Co-investing in Workers

**ACTION:** *States must invest in the skills of their workers so that increased productivity helps to offset the effect of low-cost labor furnished by developing countries. Business must be an active partner in this effort.*

**Co-Investing in Knowledge.** As recommended in the 2007 New Economy Index,<sup>52</sup> state economic development policies should offer incentives to business to build “knowledge infrastructure,” just as states have traditionally provided incentives to recruit and retain businesses and capital investments. Building knowledge as investment will help companies generate bigger returns to states as workers acquire “transferable or portable skills.” For that reason, states and business should co-invest in the skills of the workforce to ensure that workers continually adapt to evolving workforce needs, and enable companies to be more productive and profitable.

**Earning and Learning on the Job.** Only a small fraction (3 to 4 percent) of workers with the most limited literacy proficiencies have ever received basic skills training from their employers. Moreover, the frequency with which they receive such training is, at best, only equal to that of their more literate counterparts. Furthermore, a majority of the least literate workers must instead rely on public educational agencies or community-based organizations for their basic skills education.<sup>53</sup>

So, despite much rhetoric about the need for business support of basic education in the workplace, few workers appear to participate in such training.<sup>54</sup> To remedy this, states and the business community must give high priority to low-skilled incumbent worker training and provide incentives to increase participation.

States should consider:

- ~ Giving tax credits to companies that provide transferable skill training to their lower-wage and entry-level employees.
- ~ Using the unemployment insurance tax (UI) to fund employer-based incumbent worker programs. This use of the UI fund is practiced in some states and might raise productivity and improve workers’ skills in others.<sup>55</sup>
- ~ Furnishing matching grants to a sector or consortium of employers with similar skills needs.<sup>56</sup>
- ~ Providing eligible adults with access to workforce assessments and certifications.
- ~ Requiring the use of assessments and certificates as a condition for workforce matching funds.



Employers can:

- ~ Call for states to provide workforce assessments and employability certificates to validate worker skill levels.
- ~ Provide time for employees to participate in adult education and workforce skills training on the job—and be eligible for tax credits if they do so.
- ~ Support employees earning postsecondary certificates and degrees by providing them with tuition reimbursement and other financial help.
- ~ Support states in creating and using technology and information to connect people, skills, and jobs.
- ~ Take advantage of state matching grants to provide incumbent worker training.
- ~ Call for efficiency, accountability, and ongoing improvement in adult education and workforce training programs at the federal, state, and local levels.

## 8. Business and Labor Advocacy

To achieve the goals of the new federal Act and the Adult Education and Workforce Skills System, business and labor must be much more actively involved in advocacy at every level. Adult education and workforce skills programs need to be more driven by the present and evolving needs of employers and workers through business and labor participation in state and local planning boards.

In their advocacy for adult education and workforce training, businesses should work with state legislatures and call for leadership by state chambers of commerce, workforce investment boards, trade associations, and business membership organizations.

### Indiana: Setting the Pace

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce knew that small and mid-sized employers in the state were eager to help workers gain the training they needed, but needed assistance to do it. And in its own research, the Chamber found that one in three working adults in Indiana had skills that fell below labor market needs.

So, in 2007, the Chamber created *Ready Indiana*—a one-stop contact to help employers provide training to address the skills deficits of their workers. *Ready Indiana* educates employers on how to take advantage of national, state, and community resources to this end.

Most recently, the Chamber released a report card sizing up its workforce entitled “Indiana’s Adult Education and Workforce Skills Performance Report.” The Chamber plans to use hard data from that report—which shows that almost one million Hoosiers are in need of education and training—to bring about change and work out solutions for improving Indiana’s workforce.

The Indiana Chamber of Commerce has become a pacesetter in bringing businesses, educators, and employees together around the common goal of educating the workforce. Indiana leaders today believe that effort is necessary for their state’s future economic vitality.

## 9. Philanthropic and Nonprofit Leadership

Philanthropic organizations—both corporate and private—must become much more involved than they are now. The role of nonprofit organizations is equally important.

*Philanthropy.* In the past few years, grant programs at a number of corporate foundations have recognized some of the challenges we are facing in the adult education and workforce skills enterprise. Dollar General Corporation, IBM, Toyota, UPS, Verizon, and Wal-Mart are among a handful of those corporate leaders.

Several private foundations have also had significant short-term grant programs—especially in the areas of building transitions to postsecondary education and developing effective adult ESL service. These include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Hewlett and Joyce Foundations, the Lumina and Nellie-Mae Education Foundations, and a few others. Important as their work has been, little of it has been based on “adult education” as such, or on the link between adult education and workforce and economic development.

The Commission calls on the public sector to lead the way in supporting adult education and workforce skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs. But philanthropic organizations—ranging from the largest private and corporate foundations to the smallest community and family foundations—need to become part of the arsenal as well. Marshalling technology is one area in which they can play a pivotal role. There are many others.

*Nonprofits.* Nonprofit organizations of all kinds also need to be engaged. Workforce skills groups, one-stops, community colleges and other higher education institutions, various kinds of research and policy entities, youth development organizations, poverty and welfare agencies, national and state umbrella education organizations, voluntary and community-based organizations, and others all need to be part of the collective effort.

The same principles that guide state planning and coordination, and interaction among government entities and business, should apply to nonprofit organizations.

- ~ The Commission recommends the formation of a new national superagency membership organization, with philanthropic backing, to provide leadership, a platform for collaboration, and an effective voice for these disparate and vital nonprofit entities.



## 10. Building Public Awareness and Support

As it is developed, the new System will require well-funded and well-targeted campaigns at the local, state, and national levels to increase adult learner interest and public support across the country. Millions of adults who need adult education and workforce skills readiness services must understand how they would benefit from those services and how to gain access to them.

In a number of states—for example, Kentucky and the states served by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)—public awareness and media campaigns are increasing enrollments. These campaigns may hold clues about how to do this well on a national level. Adult learners within the purview of SREB can access information online through the Electronic Campus, which promotes the importance of adult learning; offers a wide range of information on courses, colleges, and certificates and degrees; and allows adults to apply online.

But beyond motivating adult students to seek the services they need, we must encourage the general public to join the battle. Among other things, their voices in state legislatures and other forums can be an important force for change. Other powerful voices for change are the thousands of former adult education students across this nation. They are a huge, untapped resource who can give compelling testimony to state legislatures and others about the difference adult education and workforce preparation programs have made in their lives.

## Section C. WE ALL BENEFIT: Real People, Real Payoff

Improving educational attainment of adults not only benefits individuals, but also their children and families, their communities, the states, and the nation.<sup>57</sup>

Better educated and more literate adults fare better than their peers on a wide array of labor market outcomes—including rates of employment, access to more highly skilled and highly paid occupations, access to training from their employers, greater weekly and annual income, and overall lifetime earnings.

The nation benefits from higher voting rates, higher rates of citizenship, more volunteerism and civic participation, better educational achievement by our children, declining recidivism and lower incarceration rates, improved public health and healthcare services, and improved fiscal contributions to state and federal coffers.

### 1. Increased Voter Participation

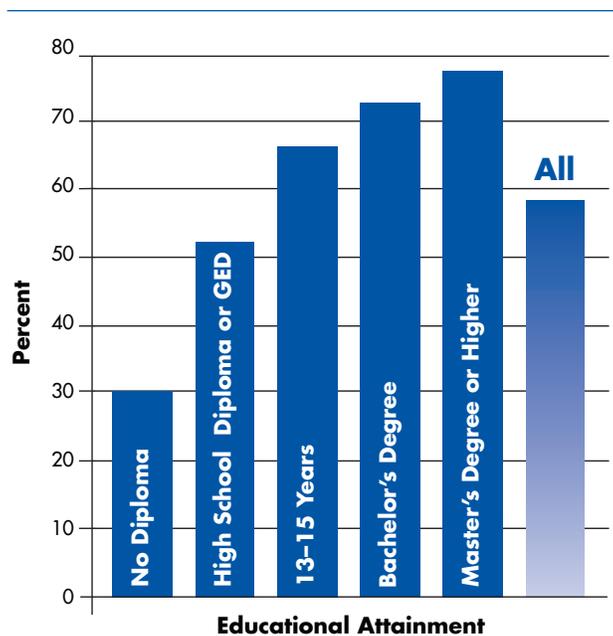
The percentage of adults who reported that they voted in the 2004 presidential election varied widely according to their educational attainment level.

(See Figure 5.)

The differences are stark. Only 30 percent of adults who lacked a high school diploma or GED voted in the election, versus 52 percent of high school graduates, 66 percent of adults with one to three years of postsecondary education, and 77 percent of those with a master's degree or higher. Adults with a bachelor's degree were 2.4 times more likely to vote than their counterparts without a high school diploma.

**Figure 5**

Percent of All Persons 18 and Older\* Who Voted in the November 2004 Election, All and by Educational Attainment



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau; prepared by Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.*

*\*Total population counts include foreign-born persons who are non-citizens.*



## 2. Higher Rates of Citizenship<sup>58</sup>

The degree of educational attainment also affects whether immigrants become naturalized citizens. The share of foreign-born immigrants who were naturalized in 2006 rose steadily and strongly according to their level of education attainment—from a low of 36 percent among those lacking a high school diploma or GED, to 51 percent among high school graduates, to a high of 67 percent among those with a bachelor's degree.

Citizenship rates among immigrant adults in 2006 were strongly associated with both their level of formal schooling and their English-speaking proficiencies. Only one of five immigrants who could not speak English and lacked a high school diploma was naturalized, versus 51 percent of those with a regular high school diploma or GED who spoke English well, and just under 71 percent of those with a bachelor's degree who spoke English very well.

## 3. Enhanced Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

Our country prides itself on the way its people volunteer their time and talents to get things done. Recent research indicates that volunteerism by adults is strongly associated with their formal educational attainment. Better educated and better paid adults are more likely to have and volunteer time for civic, community, educational, health, environmental, and political organizations.<sup>59</sup> Increasing the rate of voting, civic engagement, volunteerism, and citizenship are not just important to the nation, but also critical to the economic vitality of individuals and communities.

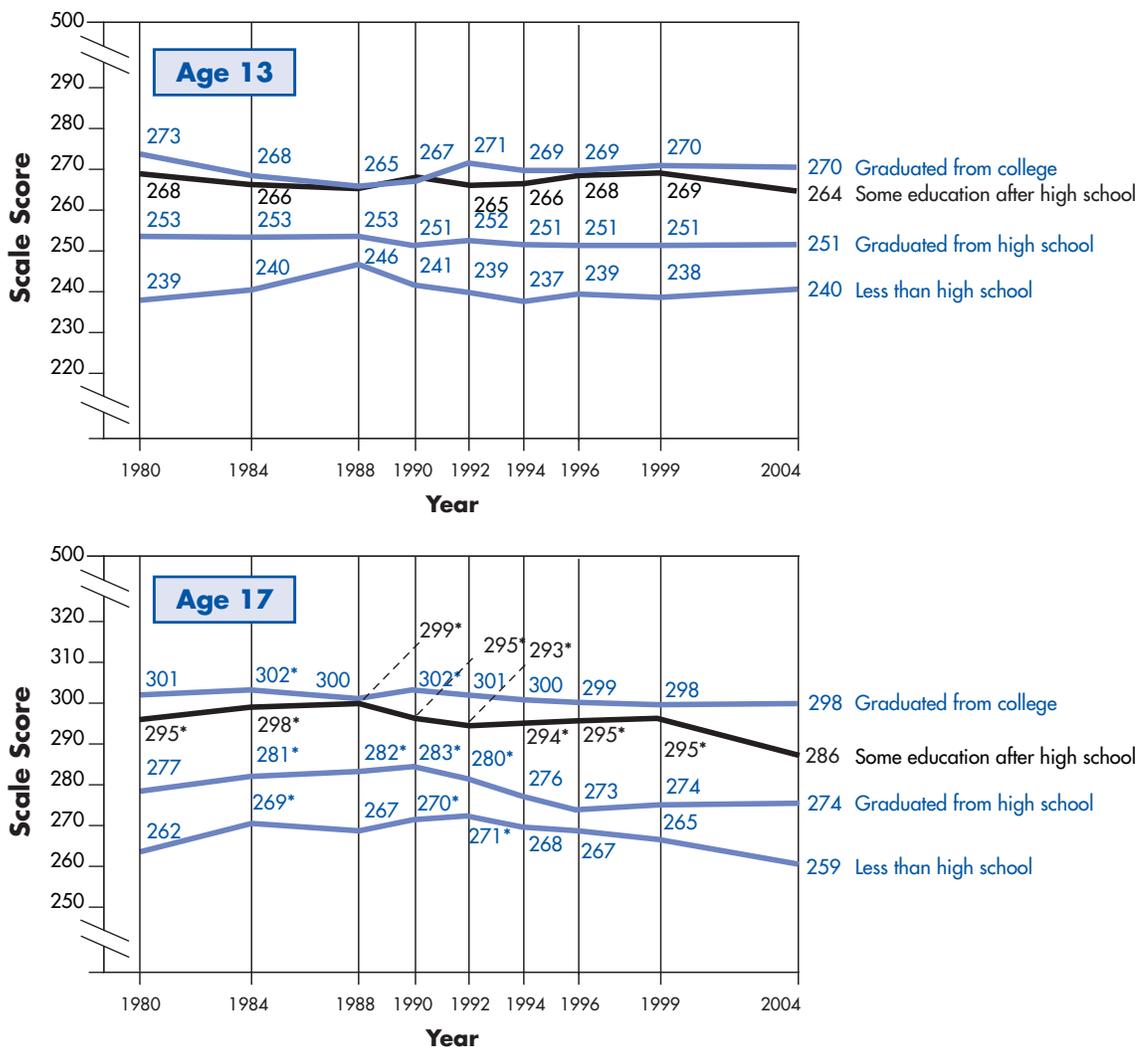
### **Maria Ramirez came to the U.S. from Guatemala as an adult in 1999.**

With no English skills and only a ninth-grade education, she learned English and earned a GED in May 2007 through the Consortium for Worker Education in New York. She is delighted that she can help her children with their schoolwork and now works as an administrative assistant in her adult education program. She is determined to attend college and become an architect. "I tell everybody to go to school, learn English, get a GED," she says. "No matter what age you are, it is really important."

## 4. Success for the Next Generation

Without educated, supportive parents, the economic and educational readiness of our children is severely hampered. As Figure 6 shows, children’s reading scores improve in proportion to their parents’ level of education.

**Figure 6**  
Trends in Average Reading Scale Scores  
by Parents’ Highest Level of Education, 1980–2004



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

\*Significantly different from 2004.



**After growing up in a difficult East Harlem neighborhood, Terrell Russell dropped out of high school.**

At age 17, he spent four months in jail on Rikers Island. After his release and a change in perspective, he earned a GED through the Fortune Society in New York City. “I needed education more than anything,” he says. Terrell is now 20, and through an internship with the American Friends Service Committee—where he has organized youth forums and worked with public officials to curb gun violence—he is preparing for college and a career in law and public service. “Education is what pushes me to keep on going,” he says. “I had a lot of mountains in my way and I had to keep pushing.”

## 5. Lower Incarceration Rates

Rates of incarceration and recidivism decline with higher educational attainment and, on average, the more education a person has, the less likely that individual is to go to prison or back to prison. Increasing the high school completion rate by just 1 percent for all men aged 20–60 would save the United States up to \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime.<sup>60</sup>

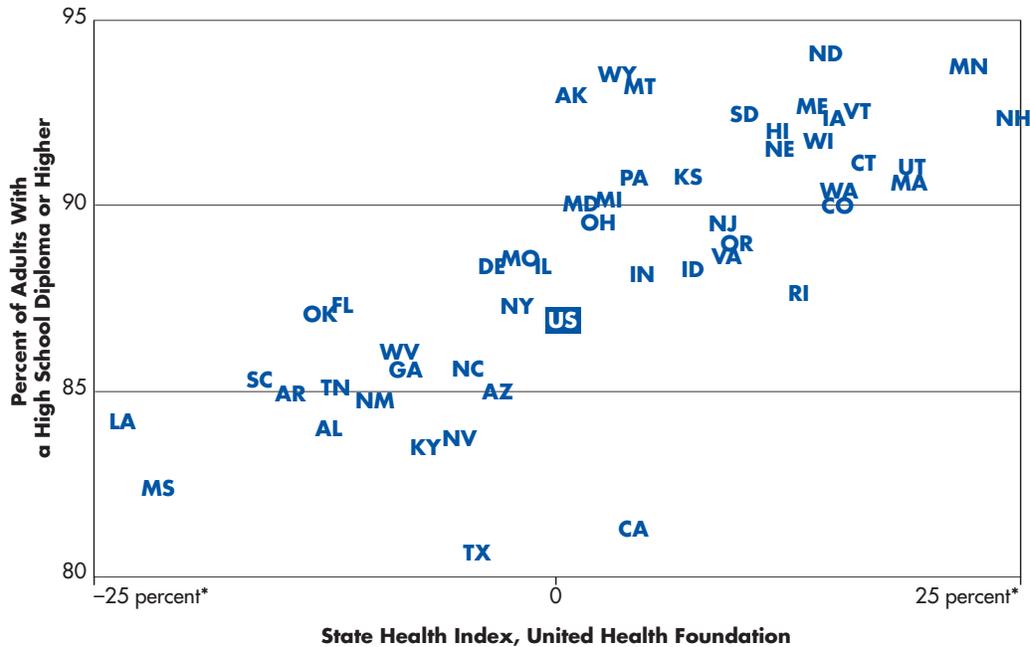
The average cost to incarcerate one person for one year is about \$21,000—an amount comparable to the tuition cost of obtaining a bachelor’s degree at many state postsecondary institutions.

## 6. Better Health and Healthcare

Securing appropriate healthcare hinges on having the skills to read and fill out medical and health insurance forms, communicate with healthcare providers, and follow basic instruction and medical advice. A recent report indicates that health literacy is a major source of economic inefficiency in the U.S. healthcare system, with 36 percent or 87 million U.S. adults functioning at basic or below basic health literacy.<sup>61</sup> It is estimated that the annual cost of low health literacy in the U.S. ranges from \$106 billion to \$238 billion annually, representing 7 percent to 17 percent of all personal healthcare expenditure. This cost is equal to that of insuring every one of the more than 47 million persons who lacked coverage in the U.S. in 2006.<sup>62</sup> Figure 7 shows the relationship between education and health levels according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

The self-reported health status of U.S. adults (18–65) complements the above findings. The percent of adults (Table 2) reporting their health status in 2006–2007 as only “fair or poor” was highest among high school dropouts (20 percent) and lowest among those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (4 to 5 percent). Less educated adults are far more likely to report a physical/mental disability and to be dependent on cash transfer incomes to support themselves when they are disabled.

**Figure 7**  
Relationship Between Education and Health, 2005



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 ACS; United Health Foundation; prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

\*The State Health Index ranks states according to their percentage above or below the national norm.

**Table 2**  
Self-Assessments of the Health Status of 18–64 Year Old Adults in the U.S. by Their Educational Attainment, March 2006–2007 (in %)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	% REPORTING EXCELLENT OR VERY GOOD HEALTH	% REPORTING FAIR OR POOR HEALTH
<12 or 12, No HS Diploma	49.2	20.2
HS Graduate or GED	57.5	13.4
1–3 Years of College	67.3	9.2
Bachelor’s Degree	76.2	5.3
Master’s or Higher	78.6	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>10.8</b>

Source: March 2006 and 2007, Current Population Surveys (CPS), public use files, prepared by Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

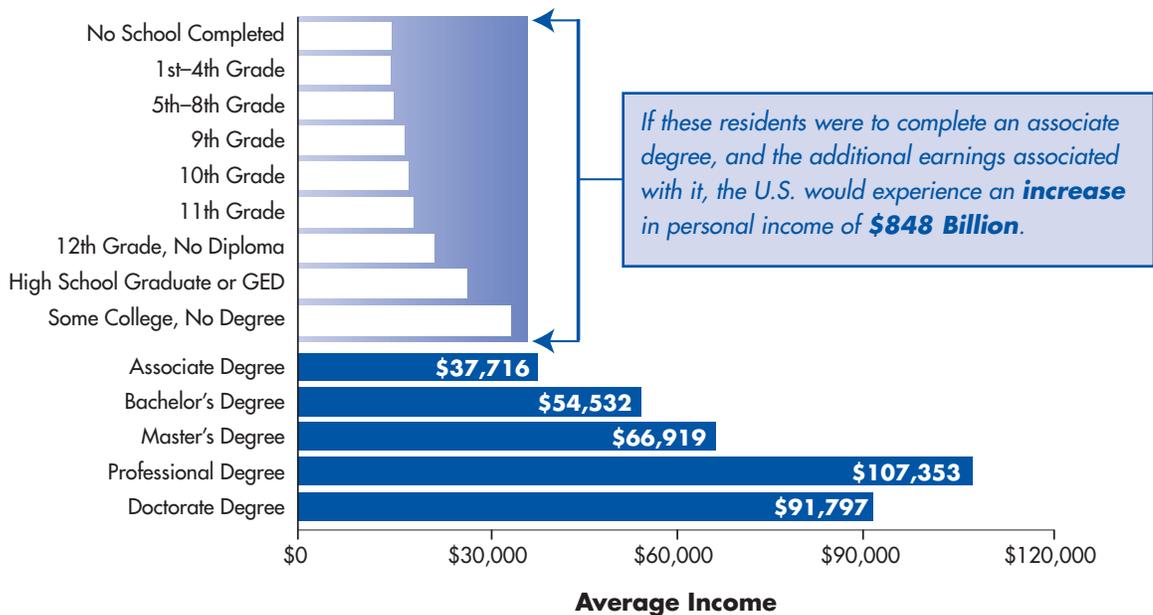
## 7. Greater Personal Income

State per capita income and per capita real output correlate positively with the educational attainment of its resident. But education is not just about earning higher wages and salaries and working more steadily or being able to obtain training and a promotion at the work site.<sup>63</sup> (See Appendix 10.) It also is what allows us to maintain a high standard of living, compete internationally, and leave the world in better shape than we found it.

The mean personal income of a U.S. resident (25–64 years old) in 2005 with only a high school diploma was 50 percent lower than that of a resident of similar age with a bachelor’s degree (\$54,532). Over a working lifetime, an individual with a high school diploma will receive about \$320,000 more in income than a high school dropout. A person with a bachelor’s degree will receive nearly twice as much (\$2.14 million) as a high school graduate (\$1.06 million). (See Figure 8.)

**Figure 8**

Mean Annual Personal Income of Population Ages 25–64 by Level of Education Completed, 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 ACS; prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

## 8. Improved Fiscal Contributions

A policy paper written for the Commission in 2007 by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University<sup>64</sup> found that adults with more schooling generate more favorable fiscal results for government at all levels—because of their higher rates of employment and annual earnings, higher marriage rates, higher home ownership rates, and lower rates of institutionalization.

The cited paper projects a \$301,000 lifetime gap between the net fiscal contributions of a high school graduate to his or her state, and an adult without a high school diploma. The projected gap between a high school graduate and the holder of a bachelor's degree is \$597,000. And compared to a peer without a high school diploma, an adult holding a bachelor's degree would contribute nearly \$900,000 more to the tax coffers of federal, state, and local governments.

The paper indicates that the substantial fiscal burden that dropouts impose on individual states can be seen by examining the ratio of an individual's tax payments to the cash, in-kind transfers, and institutionalization costs he or she receives from the government. The results for two of the states, Michigan and Texas, are shown in Tables 3-A and 3-B to illustrate the point.

**Table 3-A**

Estimates of Annual Net Fiscal Contributions of Adults (16–64)  
by Educational Attainment, 2004–2005 Averages, Michigan

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL	TAX PAYMENTS	CASH/IN-KIND TRANSFERS & INST. COSTS	TAXES, TRANSFERS, & INST. COSTS	RATIO OF TAXES, TRANSFERS, & INST. COSTS
<12 or 12, No H.S. Diploma	6,228	9,716	-3,488	0.641
H.S. Diploma/GED	8,771	4,649	4,122	1.887
Some College, including AA Degree	12,170	3,253	8,917	3.741
Bachelor's Degree	19,013	1,409	17,604	13.493
Master's or Higher Degree	28,898	1,339	27,559	21.580
<b>All</b>	<b>13,050</b>	<b>3,851</b>	<b>9,199</b>	<b>3.389</b>

In Michigan, the average high school graduate paid \$4,122 more in taxes in 2004–2005 than he or she received in cash and in-kind transfers from the government (each graduate paid \$1.89 in taxes for every \$1.00 he or she received in government benefits). Individuals with some college education, including an associate's degree, paid \$8,917 more than they received (a ratio of \$3.74 to every \$1.00). In contrast, the average Michigan adult with less than a high school diploma paid \$3,488 dollars less in taxes than he or she received in benefits that year (these adults only paid \$0.64 in taxes for every \$1.00 they received).

On a statewide scale, the difference is staggering. Based on averages, if the approximately 694,000 adults (18–64) in Michigan without a high school diploma earned a diploma or GED, their annual net fiscal contribution would increase by \$5.3 billion. If they went on to college, their annual net fiscal contribution would jump another \$3.3 billion.

**Table 3-B****Estimates of Annual Net Fiscal Contributions of Adults (16–64)  
by Educational Attainment, 2004–2005 Averages, Texas**

<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVEL</b>	<b>TAX PAYMENTS</b>	<b>CASH/IN-KIND TRANSFERS &amp; INST. COSTS</b>	<b>TAXES, TRANSFERS, &amp; INST. COSTS</b>	<b>RATIO OF TAXES, TRANSFERS, &amp; INST. COSTS</b>
<12 or 12, No H.S. Diploma	4,148	4,061	87	1.021
H.S. Diploma/GED	7,400	2,666	4,734	2.776
Some College, including AA Degree	10,480	2,095	8,384	5.001
Bachelor's Degree	17,888	783	17,105	22.837
Master's or Higher Degree	24,930	1,549	23,381	16.094
<b>All</b>	<b>10,576</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>8,167</b>	<b>4.391</b>

The differential tax contribution is even more pronounced in Texas, where the average adult with less than a high school diploma paid \$1.02 in taxes for every \$1.00 he or she received in benefits in 2004–2005 (each adult paid out \$87 more than he or she received). The average high school graduate, however, paid \$2.78 in taxes for every \$1.00 received in government benefits (each adult paid \$4,734 more than he or she received that year). Individuals with some college education, including an associate's degree, paid \$5.00 in taxes for every \$1.00 received (they each paid \$8,384 more).

When the average ratios are multiplied by the approximately 2.9 million adults (18–64) in Texas who do not have a high school diploma, the result is overwhelming—if these adults possessed a diploma or GED, their annual net fiscal contribution to national, state, and local governments would increase by \$13.5 billion. If they attended college, the annual net fiscal contribution would increase by another \$10.6 billion.

The annual net fiscal contributions gap between the average high school dropout and average high school graduate is quite large in the United States. In 2006, approximately 400,000 adults across the nation obtained a GED. If the nation's Adult Education and Workforce Skills System provides annually an additional 400,000 adults with a high school diploma or its equivalency, the average net fiscal contributions of this group would increase by \$6,235 per adult assuming they maintained the same net fiscal advantage as the average adult with a high school diploma. Thus, the net fiscal impact for federal, state, and local governments from getting 400,000 adults to earn a high school diploma is estimated to be \$2.5 billion per year. By 2020, if 4 million dropouts earn a high school diploma, the net fiscal contributions to the federal government and state and local governments would exceed \$25 billion annually.<sup>65</sup>

In short, increased educational attainment and more skilled members of the workforce will dramatically boost the fiscal position of national, state, and local governments.

## Section D. CONCLUSION

Our nation has prospered in part because its taxpayers have been willing to make public investments when and where they were needed—confident that they or their children would benefit in the future.

Today our great challenge is to help America's adults become lifetime learners and gain the marketable skills, postsecondary credentials, and English language proficiency the workforce will need to ensure the nation's continued prosperity and democratic core. In the process, everyone will be better off, including our children.

Current federal adult education and workforce skills programs need to be overhauled, redesigned, and connected more effectively to state and local programs. We cannot make it with services that operate in isolation—each with different eligibility requirements, reporting systems, and performance metrics. We must have an integrated system that serves millions of Americans in accessible, affordable, and accountable ways—on the job, online, and in the classroom. States, the business community, philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, and the general public—all need to be more aware, more committed, and more involved.

An investment of \$20+ billion or more in public and private funding by 2020 is a mere fraction of the fiscal benefits America will gain through improved health, increased personal income, greater tax revenue, and more consumption of goods and services.

*When I travel around the country, meeting with students, business people, and others interested in the economy, I am occasionally asked for investment choices. Usually (though not always) the question is posed in jest. No one really expects me to tell them which three stocks they should buy. However, I know the answer to that question and I will share it with you today. Education is the best investment....*

—Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman,  
Federal Reserve, September 24, 2007,  
at U.S. Chamber Education and Workforce Summit

The same spirit and resourcefulness that settled the West and put men on the moon must now lead us to *a national commitment to educate for life*, specifically for adults who are our current and future workforce, the parents of our children, and the keepers of our freedom. Millions of Americans will enjoy better lives. The American standard of living will be preserved. And the nation will remain a beacon of light and leadership in the world.



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## Appendix 2. Commissioners and Staff

### Commissioners



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**David Beré**  
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**Bob Bickerton**  
Senior Associate Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Past President, National Council of State Directors of Adult Basic Education



**George Kessinger**  
President and CEO, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.



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**Bridget Lamont**  
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**Mark Musick**

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**Gail Spangenberg** (Initiative Manager)

President and Founder, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy; Former Operating Head, Business Council for Effective Literacy



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***Hon. Ruth Ann Minner***

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Verizon Foundation (Judy Moog, Nancy Williams)  
Verizon Yellow Pages (Lance Chrisman)  
Virginia Commonwealth University (William Muth, formerly Federal Bureau of Prisons)  
Voices for Adult Literacy United for Education—VALUE (Marty Finsterbusch)  
Wal-Mart (Kai Togami)  
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (Israel Mendoza, Kathy Cooper)  
West Palm Beach Literacy Program (Laura Calderon)  
Westchester (NY) Library System, (Robin Osborne)  
Workforce Alliance (Andy Van Kleunan)  
Workforce Strategy Center—Kentucky (Barbara Endel)  
Wrigley, Heide (ESL Research Specialist)  
Young, Glenn (Learning Disabilities Researcher)  
YUM! Brands (Rob Lauber)

## Appendix 4. Commission Research Papers and Policy Briefs

[available at [www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org)]

**1. FOUR LAY-OF-THE-LAND PAPERS ON THE FEDERAL ROLE IN ADULT LITERACY**—presented at the Commission’s first meeting on November 14, 2006. The papers were prepared by Lennox McLendon (*Adult Education and Literacy Legislation and Its Effects on the Field*); Garrett Murphy (*Adult Education & Literacy in the United States: Need for Services, What the Current Delivery System Looks Like, and Federal Role in Adult Literacy*); and James Parker (*Introduction to the Main Strands of Federal Adult Literacy Programming*). [December 18, 2006]

**2. MOUNTING PRESSURES FACING THE U.S. WORKFORCE AND THE INCREASING NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY**—prepared by Dennis Jones (President) and Patrick Kelly (Senior Associate and Director, National Information Center), National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). This document consists primarily of 50 color graphs reflecting current data from OECD, the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Bureau of Justice, the U.S. Department of Education, GED Testing Service, and NCHEMS. The data set includes information on international comparisons, demographic trends within the U.S., U.S. education achievement levels with particular attention to groups of low achievement, and other variables that NCHEMS believes calls for a dramatically expanded and more effective adult education and literacy enterprise in America. A short introduction and executive summary indicates the authors’ main conclusions. [May 21, 2007, 67 pp.]

**3. DARE TO DREAM: A Collection of Papers from a Resource Group of 102 Education and Literacy Professionals**—developed for the Commission’s April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007, meeting in response to questions posed in several thematic areas. The document reflects the ideas, insights, cautions, and recommendations of 102 education and literacy leaders, all indicated by name and affiliation. The broad challenge was to “think outside the box,” to imagine systemic changes required to expand adult education and literacy service beyond the 3 million or so presently reached by publicly funded programs to many times that number. [May 24, 2007, 54 pp.]

**4. FORCES CHANGING OUR NATION’S FUTURE**—by labor economist Andrew Sum of Northeastern University, a member of the Commission. Dr. Sum is Professor and Director, Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University. The resource is based on research findings from *The Perfect Storm* (Educational Testing Service, March 2007), which Dr. Sum co-authored along with Irwin Kirsch and other ETS researchers. It also draws on a number of other studies. The publication includes an Author’s Introduction and Executive Summary and 30 graphs and tables. It examines the comparative performance of U.S. adults and youth on international literacy assessments, the importance of literacy and numeracy proficiencies for labor market success, and the projected outlook for literacy proficiencies of U.S. adults. [June 18, 2007, 44 pp.]

**5. TOUGH CHOICES OR TOUGH TIMES**—A DVD talk to the Commission by Marc S. Tucker, President of the National Center for Education and the Economy. This talk summarizes highlights of the report of the New Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, for which Dr. Tucker was the Study Director. It calls for dramatic, even controversial, changes in the structure and conduct of America’s K–12 and education system. The DVD is viewable online with QuickTime and Flash on both MAC and PC platforms with high-speed connections. [July 2007, 17 min.]

**6. ADULT EDUCATION AND POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS**—by researcher Stephen Reder of Portland State University and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. The paper examines GED holders in comparison to their counterparts who have received a high school diploma as well as those with no high school credential. The comparisons are made in terms of long-term postsecondary education outcomes. The author makes numerous recommendations for expanding and restructuring the adult education system, with the goal of college readiness and success in mind. [October 8, 2007, 29 pp.]



**7. WORKPLACE EDUCATION: TWENTY STATE PERSPECTIVES**—prepared by education consultant James Parker (formerly of the U.S. Department of Education). It describes various aspects of current workplace education programs in 20 states: AR, CA, CT, FL, GA, IN, KY, LA, MA, MN, MS, NY, NC, OH, PA, SC, TX, VA, WV, and WI. It examines how the programs are funded; the level of effort in each case for the past two years; connections, partnerships, and/or strategic plans implemented by workplace education programs; how states measure outcomes or determine success; the nature of workplace education outcomes achieved; challenges or barriers faced by the states; what the states consider to be the key elements of success in their workplace education efforts; and what future policy options the states would like to consider. One section of the paper presents seven policy options from the author's perspective. In an appendix to the study, profiles are given for each of the 20 states examined. [September 4, 2007, 22 pp.]

**8. FAMILY LITERACY IN ADULT EDUCATION: The Federal and State Support Role**—by Tony Peyton, Senior Policy Analyst of the National Center for Family Literacy. This special perspectives paper contains an Executive Summary and four major sections: (1) Making the Case: Why Provide Family Literacy Services; (2) Federal Support for Family Literacy; (3) Examples of State Family Literacy Initiatives; and (4) Issues and Recommendations. Among the five recommendations made by the author is that serious national and state attention should be given to the collection of comparable data about family literacy services, program types, funding, legislative provisions, and enrollments across the states, as well as research to fully demonstrate program outcomes. [September 7, 2007, 15 pp.]

**9. POLICIES TO PROMOTE ADULT EDUCATION AND POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT**—by senior policy analyst Julie Strawn of the Center for Law and Social Policy. This paper focuses on helping adults with lower skills and/or limited English proficiency earn postsecondary credentials that open doors to family-sustaining jobs. It examines obstacles to moving toward this goal—with major attention to lack of alignment between federal and state adult education efforts, job training services, and postsecondary education policies. It also draws attention to the financial, personal, and family challenges that prevent adults from seeking and completing programs. [October 18, 2007, 28 pp.]

**10. CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING FOR POSTSECONDARY READINESS**—by Daryl F. Mellard and Gretchen Anderson of the Division of Adult Studies, Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas. This policy brief examines the major assessments in use today to measure adult learning gains and determine student placements—e.g., BEST, CASAS, TABE, COMPASS, ASSET, and ACCUPLACER—in terms of their uses and how well they align with postsecondary education entry requirements. Special attention is given to the GED. [December 14, 2007, 26 pp.]

**11. THE FISCAL CONSEQUENCES OF ADULT EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**—by a team of researchers from the Center for Labor Market Studies of Northeastern University, under the leadership of Andrew Sum, who directs the Center. The report studies the earnings of adults according to their level of education achievement in terms of the impact those earnings have on the fiscal affairs of the states and the lives of individuals. Appendix E of the report gives estimates of annual net fiscal contributions of adults by education attainment level for the 13 largest states. [December 14, 2007, 66 pp.]

## Appendix 5. Commission Meetings and Presentations

### *November 14, 2006 • Full Commission Meeting • Nashville, Tennessee*

Presenters:

#### *The Federal Role in Adult Education*

- ~ **Lennox McLendon**, Executive Director, National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium
- ~ **Garrett Murphy**, Education Consultant (national policy analyst)
- ~ **James Parker**, Education Consultant (formerly, Office of Vocational & Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education)

*Student Speakers*, Recipients, National Commission award. (GED, Adult Learning Center, Wilson County, TN)

- ~ **Darron Carson**
- ~ **Amanda Riddle**
- ~ **Antonio Villa**

### *April 17, 2007 • Full Commission Meeting • New York City*

Presenters:

#### *Mounting Pressures Facing the U.S. Workforce*

- ~ **Dennis Jones**, President, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

#### *Connecting the Adult Workforce and the Economy*

- ~ **Marc Tucker**, President, National Center on Education and the Economy
- ~ **Ray Marshall**, New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce
- ~ **Andrew Sum**, Director, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

#### *Spellings Commission Report*

- ~ **Cheryl Keenan**, Director, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, OVAE, U.S. Department of Education

#### *State Action and Leadership*

- ~ **Hon. Ruth Ann Minner**, Governor of Delaware
- ~ **Hon. Gerald Baliles**, Former Governor of Virginia
- ~ **Hon. Tom Sawyer**, Ohio State Senator and former U.S. Congressman

### *August 20, 2007 • Full Commission Meeting • New York City*

Presenters:

#### *More Adults Ready for College and Work—Policy Challenges and Solutions*

- ~ **Forrest Chisman**, Executive Vice President, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy
- ~ **Maria Flynn**, Director, Office of Policy Development and Research, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor (currently with Jobs for the Future)
- ~ **James Parker**, Education Consultant (formerly, Office of Vocational & Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education)
- ~ **Stephen Reder**, Chairman of Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University
- ~ **Julie Strawn**, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy

#### *The Community College Perspective*

- ~ **Gail Mellow**, President, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY
- ~ **Juan Olivarez**, President, Grand Rapids Community College
- ~ **Camille Preus**, Commissioner, Office of Community College Services and Workforce Development, Oregon State Board of Education



***Why Do Employers and Unions Invest?***

- ~ **Ray Marshall**, Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas (Austin)
- ~ **George Kessinger**, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries International
- ~ **Morton Bahr**, President Emeritus, Communications Workers of America

***Employer-Union Models That Work—Taking It To Scale***

- ~ **Marshall Goldberg**, Executive Director, Association of Joint Labor/Management Educational Programs
- ~ **Debra Berg and Ira Baumgarten**, Co-Directors, New York State/Civil Service Employees Association Partnership for Education and Training
- ~ **Glenn Davis**, Director, Nursing Home Department & Regional Programs, 1199 Service Employees International Union Training and Employment Funds
- ~ **Harmon Lisnow**, Executive Director, Institute for Career Development, United Steelworkers
- ~ **Mary Jo Reilly**, Co-Executive Director, Alliance for Employee Growth & Development

***Student Speakers***, Recipients, National Commission award

- ~ **Oghay Kherzai** (College of Lake County, IL)
- ~ **Maria Ramirez** (Consortium for Worker Education, NYC)
- ~ **Terrell Russell** (Fortune Society, NYC)

***December 4, 2007 • Full Commission Meeting • U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC***

Presenters:

***Empowering All Americans***

- ~ **Marty Finsterbusch**, Executive Director, VALUE (Voices of Adult Learners United for Education)
- ~ **Helly Lee**, Advocacy Initiative Director, Southeast Asia Action Resource Center
- ~ **Margie McHugh**, Co-Director, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy
- ~ **Sarita Brown**, President, Excelencia in Education
- ~ **William Ramos**, Director, District of Columbia Office, National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officers (NALEO)
- ~ **Joan Wills**, Director, Center for Workforce Development, Institute for Educational Leadership

***Business Perspectives***

- ~ **Susan Bailey-Newell**, Associate Vice President, Human Resources, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- ~ **Richard Dean**, Vice President, Environmental Systems Associates (and Air Conditioning Contractors of America)
- ~ **Linda Goepfner**, Director of the People Department, Jasper Engines
- ~ **Rob Lauber**, Vice President, Global Training and YUM! University, YUM! Brands
- ~ **Kai Togami**, Sr. Director, Leadership University/Global Talent Management, Wal-Mart

***The Net Fiscal Contributions of U.S. Adults by Level of Educational Attainment***

- ~ **Andrew Sum**, Director, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

***April 8, 2008 • Full Commission Meeting • New York City***

## Appendix 6. Percentage of Adult Education State Match to Federal Grant, 2008 (Ranked by State Percentage)

STATE	STATE APPROPRIATION <sup>1</sup>	FEDERAL GRANT AMOUNT <sup>2</sup>	STATE MATCH PERCENTAGE
California	700,000,000	61,781,581	1133%
Washington	70,000,000	7,403,214	946%
Florida	227,507,229	27,026,081	842%
Minnesota	40,347,000	5,873,453	687%
North Carolina	61,546,187	14,264,484	431%
Connecticut	20,596,400	4,849,063	425%
Vermont	4,000,000	988,854	405%
Arkansas	21,447,968	5,350,811	401%
Oregon	19,000,000	4,854,156	391%
Massachusetts	30,101,348	8,404,421	358%
Hawaii	6,182,009	1,793,047	345%
Utah	9,781,008	2,867,013	341%
Kentucky	27,200,000	8,320,098	327%
New York	104,324,700	32,045,634	326%
Maine	5,039,332	1,913,858	263%
District of Columbia	3,180,000	1,251,423	254%
South Carolina	19,168,119	7,677,682	250%
Alabama	22,000,000	8,867,545	248%
Alaska	2,098,500	953,231	220%
New Mexico	6,415,100	3,376,557	190%
Illinois	34,808,298	19,222,473	181%
Michigan	24,000,000	14,313,762	168%
Indiana	14,000,000	9,352,744	150%
Wyoming	1,148,178	831,835	138%
New Jersey	16,639,835	12,689,312	131%
Pennsylvania	23,434,000	18,635,266	126%
Georgia	16,016,600	14,515,435	110%
New Hampshire	1,742,089	1,687,524	103%
Iowa	4,000,000	3,884,984	103%
Rhode Island	2,000,000	2,040,097	98%
West Virginia	3,693,116	3,768,888	98%
Maryland	6,400,000	7,389,856	87%
Missouri	5,371,137	8,908,557	60%
Louisiana	5,041,312	8,960,540	56%
Arizona	4,468,900	8,436,753	53%
Tennessee	5,700,000	10,926,213	52%
Virginia	5,600,000	10,931,242	51%
Idaho	987,263	1,993,143	50%
North Dakota	550,000	1,132,036	49%
Wisconsin	3,474,600	7,326,580	47%
Ohio	7,876,701	16,640,578	47%
Oklahoma	2,315,297	5,829,556	40%
Montana	525,000	1,346,220	39%
Delaware	495,100	1,385,195	36%
Kansas	1,200,000	3,638,676	33%
Mississippi	1,800,000	6,117,508	29%
Puerto Rico	2,425,788	10,709,036	23%
South Dakota	200,000	1,282,655	16%
Texas	6,000,000	39,975,649	15%
Nevada	450,000	3,498,242	13%
Nebraska	245,000	2,350,879	10%
Colorado	200,000	5,525,506	4%
<b>TOTAL U.S.</b>	<b>1,602,743,114</b>	<b>475,109,146</b>	<b>337%</b>

<sup>1</sup>State appropriations: David Rosen/Jim Parker, 2008 (Puerto Rico 2007)

<sup>2</sup>Federal grant amount: U.S. Department of Education, 2008 Estimates



## Appendix 7. Adult Education Enrollment, 2006–2007

STATE	TOTAL ENROLLED IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS <sup>1</sup>	ENROLLED IN ABE	%	ENROLLED IN ASE	%	ENROLLED IN ESL	%
California	586,632	107,746	18%	64,318	11%	414,568	71%
Florida	301,460	79,450	26%	104,237	35%	117,773	39%
New York	147,631	60,375	41%	9,929	7%	77,327	52%
Illinois	109,743	26,655	24%	13,087	12%	70,001	64%
North Carolina	108,745	58,509	54%	18,774	17%	31,462	29%
Texas	102,365	38,371	37%	4,820	5%	59,174	58%
Georgia	68,557	43,293	63%	5,919	9%	19,345	28%
South Carolina	58,916	44,235	75%	7,997	14%	6,684	11%
Pennsylvania	53,557	28,751	54%	9,989	19%	14,817	28%
Washington	52,810	19,480	37%	3,552	7%	29,778	56%
Ohio	47,462	31,881	67%	8,322	18%	7,259	15%
Minnesota	45,407	14,813	33%	5,736	13%	24,858	55%
Tennessee	43,179	31,173	72%	5,273	12%	6,733	16%
Indiana	40,771	23,026	56%	9,714	24%	8,031	20%
New Jersey	35,374	11,301	32%	2,437	7%	21,636	61%
Puerto Rico	34,903	7,606	22%	25,985	74%	1,312	4%
Missouri	34,374	22,194	65%	5,097	15%	7,083	21%
Michigan	32,856	18,739	57%	3,132	10%	10,985	33%
Maryland	32,535	14,294	44%	4,477	14%	13,764	42%
Virginia	32,502	11,797	36%	4,359	13%	16,346	50%
Arkansas	31,912	19,492	61%	6,911	22%	5,509	17%
Kentucky	31,458	22,433	71%	5,677	18%	3,348	11%
Connecticut	26,686	6,623	25%	7,949	30%	12,114	45%
Wisconsin	25,792	12,730	49%	6,154	24%	6,908	27%
Utah	24,869	11,883	48%	3,650	15%	9,336	38%
Arizona	24,861	9,183	37%	1,037	4%	14,641	59%
Massachusetts	23,957	5,517	23%	3,333	14%	15,107	63%
Louisiana	23,601	18,002	76%	3,598	15%	2,001	8%
Mississippi	21,775	17,776	82%	3,391	16%	608	3%
Oregon	21,713	9,224	42%	1,818	8%	10,671	49%
New Mexico	20,040	10,467	52%	1,972	10%	7,601	38%
Oklahoma	19,146	12,212	64%	2,824	15%	4,110	21%
Alabama	18,742	12,694	68%	4,319	23%	1,729	9%
Colorado	14,530	3,763	26%	1,164	8%	9,603	66%
Iowa	9,664	3,702	38%	2,070	21%	3,892	40%
Nevada	9,483	1,056	11%	516	5%	7,911	83%
Kansas	9,323	4,134	44%	1,387	15%	3,802	41%
West Virginia	8,872	6,783	76%	1,925	22%	164	2%
Nebraska	8,699	4,019	46%	928	11%	3,752	43%
Maine	8,215	3,774	46%	2,767	34%	1,674	20%
Idaho	7,961	4,279	54%	656	8%	3,026	38%
Hawaii	7,772	2,884	37%	1,399	18%	3,489	45%
Rhode Island	6,787	2,800	41%	642	9%	3,345	49%
New Hampshire	5,797	1,794	31%	2,255	39%	1,748	30%
Delaware	4,863	2,511	52%	854	18%	1,498	31%
District of Columbia	3,384	1,236	37%	500	15%	1,648	49%
Alaska	3,244	2,005	62%	656	20%	583	18%
South Dakota	2,977	2,012	68%	569	19%	396	13%
Montana	2,697	1,813	67%	694	26%	190	7%
Vermont	2,404	1,533	64%	713	30%	158	7%
Wyoming	2,316	1,139	49%	786	34%	391	17%
North Dakota	1,776	1,083	61%	442	25%	251	14%
<b>TOTAL U.S.</b>	<b>2,405,095</b>	<b>914,245</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>390,710</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1,100,140</b>	<b>46%</b>

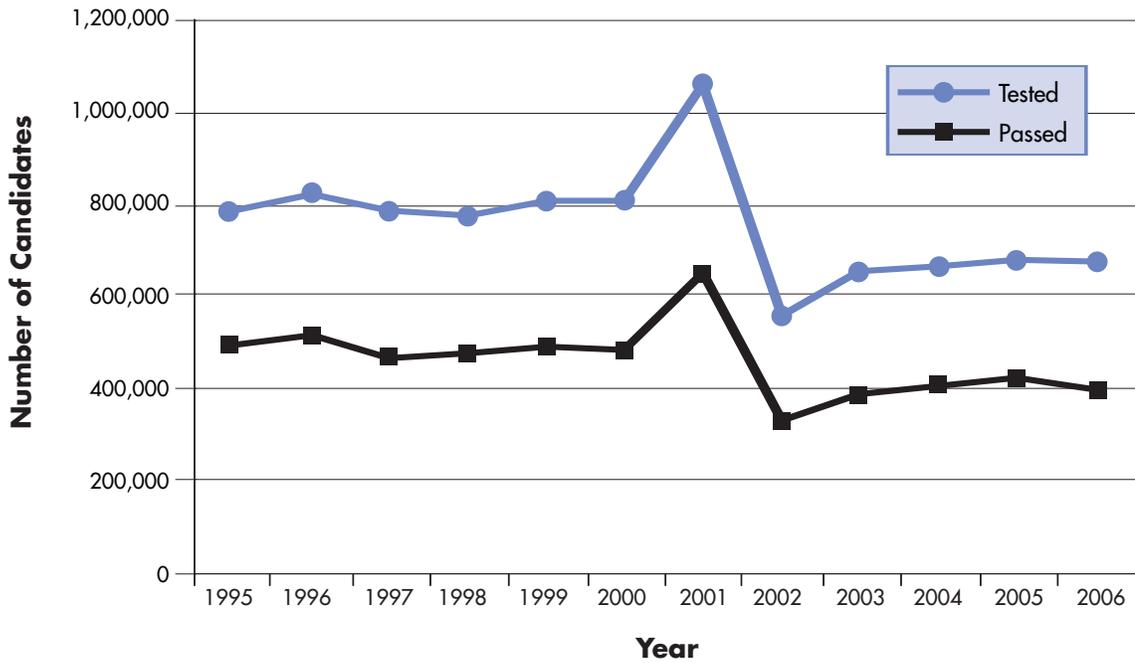
<sup>1</sup>Enrollment: U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, NRS 2006–2007

ABE: Adult Basic Education (basic skills for lower literacy levels)

ASE: Adult Secondary Education (high school literacy skills for those seeking a GED)

ESL: English as a Second Language

## Appendix 8. U.S. GED Trends, 1995–2006



Source: GED Testing Service, 2005 and 2006.

## Appendix 9. National GED Need and Attainment, 2006 (Ranked by State Need)

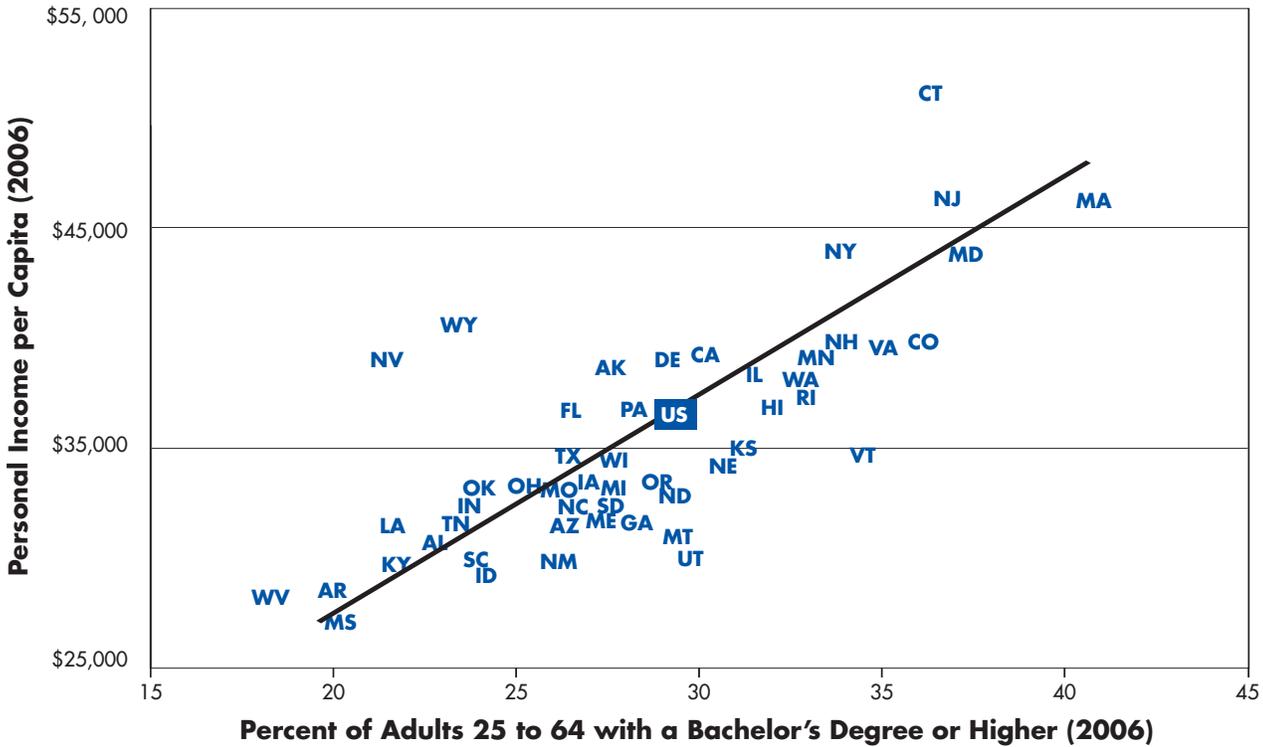
STATE	ADULTS 18–64 WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA <sup>1</sup>	NUMBER OF GEDs ATTAINED <sup>2*</sup>	GEDs ATTAINED AS A PERCENTAGE OF NEED*
California	4,283,628	26,392	0.6%
Texas	2,905,776	31,702	1.1%
New York	1,666,807	28,345	1.7%
Florida	1,557,294	26,046	1.7%
Georgia	970,715	17,065	1.8%
North Carolina	863,717	12,049	1.4%
Ohio	816,310	16,323	2.0%
Pennsylvania	805,807	13,155	1.6%
Michigan	694,039	9,839	1.4%
New Jersey	620,750	7,879	1.3%
Puerto Rico	615,012	1,383	0.2%
Arizona	612,202	11,219	1.8%
Tennessee	587,320	10,283	1.8%
Virginia	587,097	13,173	2.2%
Indiana	524,352	9,785	1.9%
Louisiana	490,504	6,584	1.3%
Alabama	480,192	4,113	0.9%
Missouri	463,082	8,597	1.9%
Washington	445,447	10,877	2.4%
South Carolina	430,800	5,594	1.3%
Kentucky	430,777	8,724	2.0%
Colorado	421,126	8,309	2.0%
Massachusetts	404,841	6,932	1.7%
Maryland	383,271	5,095	1.3%
Illinois	353,945	13,561	3.8%
Mississippi	342,645	5,979	1.7%
Wisconsin	330,814	7,264	2.2%
Oklahoma	314,255	6,293	2.0%
Oregon	286,474	7,575	2.6%
Arkansas	268,813	6,517	2.4%
Nevada	255,360	3,498	1.4%
Minnesota	249,891	5,789	2.3%
Connecticut	205,793	2,739	1.3%
New Mexico	205,167	4,204	2.0%
Kansas	177,449	3,963	2.2%
West Virginia	167,591	3,213	1.9%
Iowa	165,744	3,632	2.2%
Utah	157,029	4,786	3.0%
Idaho	107,371	3,253	3.0%
Nebraska	105,058	2,254	2.1%
Rhode Island	91,060	1,431	1.6%
Maine	74,848	2,488	3.3%
New Hampshire	72,830	1,508	2.1%
Delaware	67,879	598	0.9%
Hawaii	60,664	1,370	2.3%
Montana	54,276	2,006	3.7%
District of Columbia	52,056	524	1.0%
Alaska	46,969	1,702	3.6%
South Dakota	44,428	1,241	2.8%
Vermont	31,806	778	2.4%
Wyoming	28,953	1,154	4.0%
North Dakota	25,534	1,008	3.9%
<b>TOTAL U.S.</b>	<b>26,405,568</b>	<b>399,791</b>	<b>1.5%</b>

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS

<sup>2</sup>GEDTS, 2006

\*About one-third of national GED completers prepared for the test in the adult education system.

## Appendix 10. Relationship Between Education and Personal Income, 2006

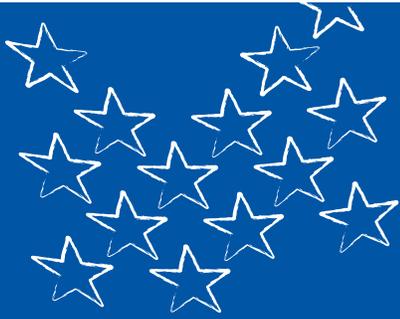


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 ACS; Bureau of Economic Analysis; prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

# NOTES

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[www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org)

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